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## Internet Life

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 6 • JUNE 1997

**'Friends' Online**

# Best Chats

9-Page Guide

Is There Intelligent Life  
in Chat Rooms?

**Lisa Kudrow**

...says No. We say Yes!

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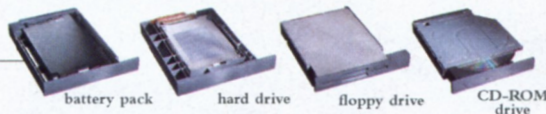
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One of the stars of the TV and Web phenomenon "Friends" talks to us about chat, obsessions, and more.

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By Karen Heyman, Flo Conway, and Jim Siegelman

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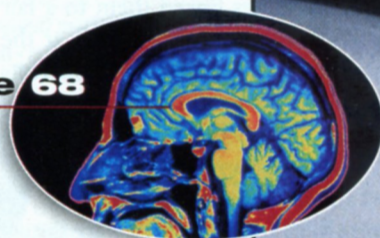
Learn how to avoid the online scamsters.



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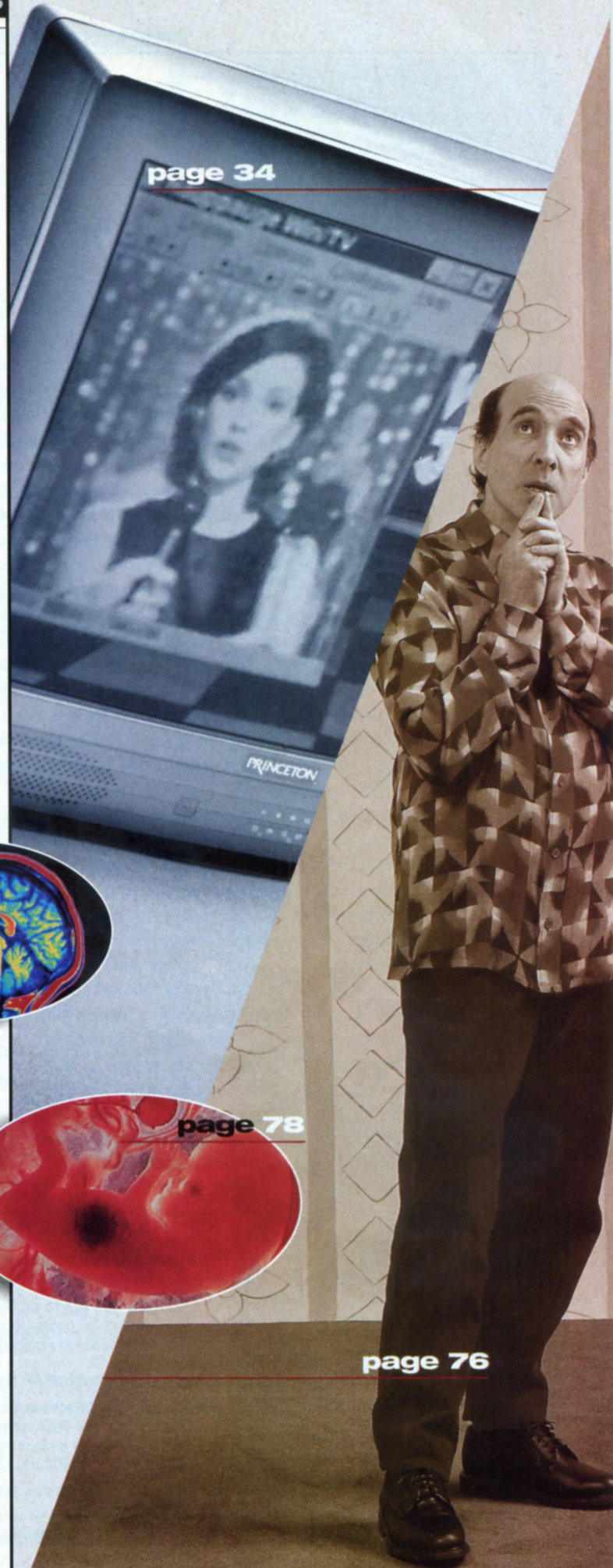
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## EDITOR'S NOTE



JEFF WEINER

### Can We Talk?

If you don't count e-mail, chat is the most popular online activity. It still happens mainly on the online services—AOL, et al.—but in recent months, chat has taken center stage on the Net. New technologies have brought online banter out of its origins as a difficult-to-master sideline, and it now includes slick graphics and avatars. But the question remains: how much of it is any good?

If you believe our cover subject this month, Lisa Kudrow, one of the stars of "Friends," it can *all* be too much. Since she's both a topic of online chat and a once-avid participant, the frank views she shares with West Coast editor **David Sheff** are worth considering. But, there's gab-gold as well as gab-garbage out there, so we asked writer **Dina Gan** to immerse herself in chat. From her report we put together a list of the 25 best chatterboxes, as well as a more comprehensive list of chat sources by special interest. As for Gan, after this project, she says she'll just lurk for a while.

The gay and lesbian community was one of the earliest to go online at a time that also roughly corresponds with the onset of the AIDS crisis. **David Nimmons**, one of the founding spirits of Gay Men's Health Crisis and an online pioneer himself (a media colleague who turned me on to computers 15 years ago when he proudly showed off his new "portable" Kaypro, weighing in, as I recall, at 20 pounds), writes in "The Gay Connection" about the major g & l sites, including those that provide critical information on AIDS. Thanks Dave, on both counts.

By the time this issue appears, more than a month will have passed since the Heaven's Gate suicides, an event whose first bizarre headlines linked them to a fair amount of Internet-bashing. Contributing writer **Karen Heyman** takes a look at the "Net effect" of this media hurricane, and we also asked researchers **Flo Conway** and **Jim Siegelman**, authors of *Snapping*, the classic study of how cults work on the human mind, to contribute an essay asking a few provocative questions about whether any of the wilder speculation about mind control and Net use had any scientific basis.

By the way, our Web staff, led by **Howard Sherman** and **Scott Alexander**, did an ace job getting the story online. Editorial assistants **Theresa Riley** and **Elissa Klotz** were the key sleuths in downloading one of the earliest "mirrors" of the cult site, competing with Pathfinder and others. In fact, when *Newsweek* ran a photo of the Heaven's Gate site inside a browser frame, sharp-sighted readers may have caught our Web address. Guess *Newsweek* wasn't about to get its news from Pathfinder, a Time Warner site.

*Barry Golson*

**Barry Golson**  
Editor-in-Chief  
bgolson@zd.com



EDIE BASKIN/OUTLINE

Above: "Friends" star Lisa Kudrow seeks signs of intelligent life in chat. Below: Y!L becomes the source for *Newsweek's* news.



#### OUR TEAR-OUT SITE ADDRESS GUIDE IS ON PAGE 17

##### How does this magazine work together with your Web site?

You can find the entire issue—and other, daily features—on our site at [www.yil.com](http://www.yil.com).

##### What's this got to do with Yahoo!, the directory?

You go to Yahoo! ([www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)) for directions to sites on the Web; you come to us for info about why you would want to go to those sites, and for a sense of what all the daily hoopla really means.

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Just had to tell you how happy I am regarding *Yaboo! Internet Life's* March [97] issue ["Find Anyone—25 Most Incredibly Useful Sites"]. I used [www.whowhere.com](http://www.whowhere.com) and was able to locate my copilot, with whom I flew 35 combat missions in the 8th Air Force. I have been trying for almost three years using other sites, but in vain. With WhoWhere? I found him in 15 minutes! We have not seen one another since March 1945 (52 long years!). I am a brand-new subscriber and have passed on this wonderful news to all my friends.

I enjoy Old Way/Net Way, but don't you think David Sheff's image of libraries is a bit old? Perhaps he lives in a little out-of-the-way town where computers haven't arrived yet. Many librarians in the San Francisco Bay Area have the Internet along with other electronic resources available on their desks. Without a "first line" of poetry available [See *YIL*, Old Way/Net Way, April '97], I would perhaps have checked a CD-ROM because of its more stable environment and then checked the Internet. I think it would be nice if *Yaboo!* *Internet Life* didn't promote its own "library image" on the public. We need all the help we can get, not negative press! Their "business" is finding information, not, as David Sheff believes, an investment in books. Reading and print has its place, as your print magazine attests, but my advanced degree is in Library and Information Science, not Books and Printing. Thanks.

*Sheff does, indeed, live in a small town with an excellent library, but its hours and facilities are limited. That's true for a lot of people, and it's one reason Old Way/Net Way is designed to reflect real-world tasks. But we love libraries, too—big or small.*

I am honored to have my site [Ben's Cable Box: [www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Park/3254/cabletv.htm](http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Park/3254/cabletv.htm)] picked as one of the "25 Most Incredibly Useful Sites" by *Yahoo! Internet Life* magazine [March '97]. I thought the review was great. But what did the reviewer mean by, "There is one drawback, and one drawback only: he isn't much use on WebTV"? I have recently tested my site with a new Sony WebTV unit and it worked perfectly! I feel his statement may cause some WebTV users to not even check out the site. But thanks for a great magazine.

Happy to give your estimable site yet another mention, Ben, and let us explain. Yes, your page looks fine on WebTV, but no, the TV information on your page provides no advice on what to do when your WebTV system fails to function. Hope that clears up any misunderstanding.

So, I'm reading your feature, "Coming Net-Tractions" [*Yaboo! Internet Life*, March '97], and despite being someone who once believed "To the victor, the spoils," the extent of Microsoft's reach is beginning to concern me. The pies that Bill Gates and co. have their microfingers in include: the all-new TV station, MSNBC; DreamWorks; Paramount Studio's most powerful franchise, Star Trek; and the city guides that the company intends to launch planet-wide, Sidewalk. Add to this the forthcoming browser, an Explorer that explores its way right into your operating system, and it looks as though Microsoft isn't just looking to "own" entertainment, nor even just the way we receive it, but also how we understand it and relate to it. Now, I can't be the only person thinking this way, and I'll be curious to see how you will respond to this subtle but seemingly unstoppable force in our culture.

—JOHN BRYAN, New Jersey

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# Click! around the net

## Memorable Site OF THE MONTH

American Literary Classics, A Chapter a Day

[www.mindport.net/~arezis](http://www.mindport.net/~arezis)

Of all the "...of the Day" sites out there, here's one that is truly memorable for its melding together of new and old media, for its use of interactive technology, and for its insight. English teachers, students, avid readers, and those of us who



want to read the classics but just can't seem to get around to it can benefit from this slow-mo crash course. As you take your daily dose of, say, classics such as Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mobicans*, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, or Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, read the insights of other readers, post your own, or ask questions in the

Readers Discussion Room. Find out what Mark Twain said about John Fenimore Cooper (ouch!). There's even a Young Readers Library, which also has a discussion area, and a note to educators about the suggested grade level for a given book. Reading a book online may not be as cozy as curling up with a good hardcover, but no one says you have to. Buy a copy, and let this site be your literary guide.

“”

“Saint Augustine said he was struck by horror when he saw someone reading without moving his lips. It meant the end of the oral tradition, the internalization of print. People forget that the most invisible technology is most potent. The Internet does the same thing—you sit there, but not really in your body, directly interacting with another writer, which you can't quite do when reading a book.”—David Cronenberg, director (*Crash*)

“Some of the stuff on there, I mean, I wouldn't even publish it.”—Larry Flynt, on the Internet

## Obsession OF THE MONTH

For the Love of Lara

An Indiana Jones with the moves of an Olympic gymnast and the fire-power of Duke Nukem, Lara Croft is the star of “Tomb Raider,” one of the next generation of games launched simultaneously for PCs and game stations. “Tomb Raider” combines the exploration of “Myst” with the action (read: gunplay) of “Doom,” and Croft has become the darling of the dungeons. Her admirers have created a Web



ring, connecting each fan page to the next in a circle of links. Croft has proven so popular that the game developers are shopping a deal to make a movie based on her life. Well, “life” is probably the wrong word. Nevertheless, Ms. Croft is worth watching—she's a woman of many levels. And if you think this level of obsession with pixelated pulchritude is weird, see Roger Ebert tackle virtual love on page 40.

Sanctuary of Scion (Matt's “Tomb Raider” Page)

[www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Alley/4256](http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Alley/4256)

Chris's “Tomb Raider” Page [www.infi.net/~rorscott](http://www.infi.net/~rorscott)

## What the Search Engines Found

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Chip Off the Old Block .....	100
Papa Hemingway .....	99
Papa John Creech .....	33
Papa Bear .....	500
The Mamas and the Papas .....	109,900





*New  
Version 3.0  
May 1997*



The screenshot shows the Google Maps interface with a route from New York City to Kingston, NY. The left sidebar lists the following stops and distances:

Stop	Time	Distance	Order	City
New York City, NY			1	
SR 304	3	0.00	0	NE
US 9W (Greenwich)	16	0.04	3	N
US 208 (Greenwich)	1	0.26	19	N
Stop - White Plains, NY				
US 208 (White Plains, NY)	1	0.21	20	S
US 9W (Greenwich)	3	0.23	21	S
Stop - Shaw Mountain, NY				
US 9W (Greenwich)	0.5	0.26	24	W
Palestine (Shaw Mountain, NY)	0.2	0.26	25	N
US 6	1.6	0.27	26	E
SR 30 (Shaw Mountain, NY)	9	0.27	26	N
SR 30 (Shaw Mountain, NY)	2	0.27	34	NE
US 156 (Shaw Mountain, NY)	8	0.40	27	N
US 52 (Shaw Mountain, NY)	0.1	0.47	44	W
Stop - Fishkill, NY				
SR 52 (Fishkill, NY)	0.1	0.47	44	W
US 9	12	0.47	44	W
US 44 (US 9)	1	1.00	46	N
Stop - Poughkeepsie, NY				
US 44 (US 9) (Poughkeepsie, NY)	3	1.05	57	W
US 9W (US 44) (Poughkeepsie, NY)	18	1.12	60	N
Stop - Fishkill - Kingston, NY				
Fishkill - Kingston, NY	1	1.18	25	N

The map shows the route starting from New York City, passing through White Plains, Shaw Mountain, Fishkill, and Poughkeepsie, and ending in Kingston, NY. The route is highlighted in red, and the map includes various geographical features like roads, water bodies, and landmarks.



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Tragic Kingdom
4. **LEONARD BERNSTEIN**  
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Debut Recording
5. **SPICE GIRLS**  
Spice
6. **AEROSMITH**  
Nine Lives
7. **COLLECTIVE SOUL**  
Disciplined Breakdown
8. **SPACE JAM**  
Sound track
9. **JEWEL**  
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10. **HADEN/METHANY**  
Beyond the Missouri Sky

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## BOOKS

1. **Stones from the River**  
by Ursula Hegi
2. **Creating Killer Web Sites**  
by David Siegel
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5. **The Education of a Speculator**  
by Victor Niederhoffer
6. **Personal History**  
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by Andrew Weil
8. **She's Come Undone**  
by Wally Lamb
9. **Spontaneous Healing**  
by Andrew Weil
10. **Lives of the Monster Dogs**  
by Kirsten Bakis

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## What To Look For

Checking in on the Web sites of upcoming CD and film releases

**DANDY WARHOLS** CDs  
Come Down (Capitol)  
[hollywoodandvine.com/Starlandmotel/dandyweb.html](http://hollywoodandvine.com/Starlandmotel/dandyweb.html)

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Lounge-A-Palooza (Hollywood)  
[www.hollywoodrec.com](http://www.hollywoodrec.com)

**WU-TANG CLAN**  
Wu-Tang Forever (2-CD set)  
(Loud/RCA)  
[www.loud.com/wu/wu.html](http://www.loud.com/wu/wu.html)

## MOVIES

**CON AIR**  
(Buena Vista)  
[www.movies.com/conair/](http://www.movies.com/conair/)

**AUSTIN POWERS**  
(New Line)  
[www.austinpowers.com](http://www.austinpowers.com)

**TITANIC**  
(Paramount/20th Century Fox)  
[www.titanicmovie.com](http://www.titanicmovie.com)

**BATMAN AND ROBIN**  
(Warner Bros.)  
[www.batman-robin.com](http://www.batman-robin.com)

**MEN IN BLACK** (Columbia)  
[www.spe.sony.com/Pictures/SonyMovies/movies/Meninblack/intro.html](http://www.spe.sony.com/Pictures/SonyMovies/movies/Meninblack/intro.html)

## NET NEWS BRIEFS

BY JOHN MOTAVALLI

### MICROSOFT BRINGS YOU WEB TV...

As reported in our March issue, Microsoft takes a deep interest in bringing the Web into your living rooms, and it has now acquired Web TV for a cool \$425 million (pending agreement by the Department of Justice). The news came just days after the federal government told us that our current TV sets will be outmoded within six years, replaced by state-of-the-art HDTV (high-definition TV) digital sets.

### ...AND IT KNOWS WHERE YOU LIVE

Sidewalk, Microsoft's local Web guide, has now launched in Seattle and New York, and features short articles and event listings while maintaining a review archive of area bars, restaurants, arts, music, etc. The free service, in which Microsoft plans to invest hundreds of millions of dollars, will be launched in as many as 15 cities worldwide by 1998.

### AOL + COMPU SERVE/MICROSOFT = ?

The ongoing courtship (at press time) of CompuServe by America Online could add three million members and free it from a January legal settlement that restricted the company from expanding until it beefed up its technical capacity. But chagrin to AOL if, as has been rumored, Microsoft makes a higher bid. H&R Block, which owns 80 percent of CompuServe, has taken heavy losses on the service and has been in the market for a buyer since 1996.

### .SLEEPY, .GRUMPY, .DOC?

The news that the Internet Ad Hoc Committee has approved seven new top-level domains (.web, .firm, .store, .arts, .rec, .info, and .nom) has provoked much protest among Internet activists. Besides doubts that a new set of suffixes will genuinely open up the registration process, concern centers around consumer confusion over site names. For example, is that blue-light special at [kmart.com](http://kmart.com) or [kmart.store](http://kmart.store)?

### WHERE TEENS SURF

Teenagers' number one Net activity is surfing entertainment sites, followed by chat, e-mailing friends, and playing games, according to a teen.com study conducted by Cheskin and Masten, a firm that tracks teenagers' attitudes and behavior. Favorite sites among the 250 teens who responded were MTV.com, Teen.com, and ESPNET SportZone. Claimed as least favorite sites were Playboy.com, CocaCola.com, and Sex.com.





**NED**



**Ned knows he can book a flight  
from a computer.**

**BOB**



**Bob knows from his computer  
he can book a flight (and earn up to  
500 bonus AAdvantage® miles every  
time he does so), select his seat, see  
what movie is playing, manage his  
AAdvantage account, check out special  
AAdvantage promotions and low  
Net SAver Fares™, look up all sorts  
of flight information and learn  
interesting facts most humans don't  
know about airplanes. For instance,  
did you know a Boeing 757 has a  
wingspan of 124' 10", roughly six  
times that of the average pterodactyl?**

**Bob did.**

So what does Bob know that you and Ned don't, besides the wingspans of extinct creatures? He knows about AAccess™—the American Airlines Interactive Travel Network™, available on the web and with Personal AAccess™ software.

With AAccess, you can do everything from planning trips and purchasing tickets, to checking flight schedules and information, to keeping track of your AAdvantage travel awards program miles,



from flights, hotel stays and rental cars, as well as award levels. All from your computer. And right now, you can earn up to 500 bonus miles with every American and American Eagle® trip you book on-line and complete by the end of the year.

So why let Bob have all the fun? Visit AAccess via the Web™ on the Internet. Or for a WINDOWS®-based link to American Airlines, call for our Personal AAccess software.

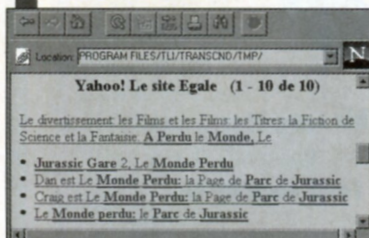
**American Airlines®**

For Internet users, AAccess via the Web is located at [www.americanair.com](http://www.americanair.com). To order Personal AAccess for your PC, call 1-800-AACCESS (222-2377).

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## Lost in the Translation...



EasyTranslator is a software package that promises quick and easy translations of text, e-mail, and Web pages from Spanish, French, and German, taking you "to the far reaches of cyberspace or the friendly side streets of our global village...instantly!" Really great idea—and it almost works. Here are a few sentences translated into French and back:

"How are you doing?"  
 "How is done what you?"  
 "Are you bored?"  
 "Is what are pierced you?"  
 "See you."  
 "You to see."

## Canned Laughter

What are slogan T-shirts but unsolicited advertising? Admit it, they're Spam. Hormel Inc. not only owns up to it, it has embraced it, launching a catalog of tees, ties, hats, and accessories called, of course, "Spamtastic!" As the catalog copy says, "People want to know who among them is a Spam luncheon meat fan." They're right, we do want to know—but we don't need T-shirts to be able to tell.

**Spamtastic! catalog hotline**  
 (800) 686-SPAM



## JERRY AND DAVID'S Amateur Hour

The Yahoo! directory began as a labor of love by its founders, Jerry Yang and David Filo. Here they select a site created out of the same passion.

**Xander Mellish Stories and Cartoons**  
[www.users.interport.net/~xmell/index2.html](http://www.users.interport.net/~xmell/index2.html)



Xander Mellish started "publishing" her short stories by posting them on telephone poles and in restaurants near her Greenwich Village apartment. A phone number was included for people who wanted to read on—and she sent more stories, free. Now Mellish, 28, who has a "day job" writing about municipal bonds, has found a new way to post her stories: online—and she doesn't even have to worry about rain washing away the ink. The Internet also affords Mellish the opportunity to show her work without getting publishers involved. "So much of it is hype," she says about traditional publishing. "[The Internet] is the way to bring this art form back to regular people, and not just that little literary clique." Not too long ago, she received e-mail from Pulitzer Prize-winner Robin Olen Butler, who wrote to thank her for making a late-night Web-browse very pleasant indeed. "I greatly enjoyed your stories. Best of luck out there on the cutting edge."



## Tips

### OF THE MONTH

### site gag



1. In Netscape, right-clicking anywhere on a Web page brings up a menu where you can move one page forward, one page back, add the page to your bookmarks, or create an Internet shortcut (a link on your desktop that will open Netscape directly to the Web page).

2. In Internet Explorer, right-clicking brings up nine possibilities: Save Background As, Set As Wallpaper, Select All (text), Create Shortcut, Add to Favorites, View Source, Refresh, and Properties.

3. To check out a file or a file-folder on your hard disk while using IE or Netscape, simply type the name in the address box (c:\folder name) and press Enter. Both browsers will list the contents of folders on your hard disk.



# the charts

You want lists? You want arguments? We got 'em!

## DUELING HIT PARADES

### The Top of the Net (with previous month's rankings) (the most popular sites on the Web, period)

#### (PC-Meter)

- 1 AOL.com (1)
- 2 Yahoo.com (2)
- 3 Netscape.com (3)
- 4 WebCrawler.com (4)
- 5 Excite.com (6)
- 6 Microsoft.com (5)
- 7 GeoCities.com (9)
- 8 Infoseek.com (7)
- 9 Lycos.com (8)
- 10 MSN.com (10)
- 11 Digital.com (11)
- 12 Prodigy.com (12)
- 13 CompuServe.com (13)
- 14 Four11.com
- 15 Switchboard.com

PC-Meter ([www.npd.com/pcmeter.htm](http://www.npd.com/pcmeter.htm)) measures Web sites via software installed in 10,000 households. Information is collected digitally from Windows PCs in the home.

#### (100hot)

- 1 Netscape (1)
- 2 Microsoft (2)
- 3 Yahoo!, et al. (3)
- 4 GeoCities (6)
- 5 AOL.com, et al. (5)
- 6 Pathfinder, et al. (4)
- 7 Disney (12)
- 8 ESPNET SportsZone, et al. (7)
- 9 AltaVista (10)
- 10 NBA.com
- 11 Playboy
- 12 MSN
- 13 CNN
- 14 MacroMedia
- 15 Windows95.com (14)

Web 21 ([www.web21.com](http://www.web21.com)) measures traffic patterns of 100,000 surfers at strategic points on the Internet. Full list can be found at Web 21's 100bot ([www.100bot.com](http://www.100bot.com)).

### News/Info/Entertainment Sites

(the top content publishers on the Web)

#### (PC-Meter)

- 1 ZD Net [www.zdnet.com](http://www.zdnet.com)
- 2 Pathfinder [www.pathfinder.com](http://www.pathfinder.com)
- 3 Disney [www.disney.com](http://www.disney.com)
- 4 The Weather Channel [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)
- 5 CNET [www.cnet.com](http://www.cnet.com)
- 6 MSNBC [www.msnbc.com](http://www.msnbc.com)
- 7 Intellicast [www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)
- 8 ESPNET SportsZone [espn.sportszone.com](http://espn.sportszone.com)
- 9 CNN [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)
- 10 USA Today [www.usatoday.com](http://www.usatoday.com)



Excluding browsers, online service sites, and hub search/directory sites.

#### (100hot)

- 1 Pathfinder, et al. [www.pathfinder.com](http://www.pathfinder.com)
- 2 Disney [www.disney.com](http://www.disney.com)
- 3 ESPNET SportsZone, et al. [espn.sportszone.com](http://espn.sportszone.com)
- 4 NBA [www.nba.com](http://www.nba.com)
- 5 Playboy [www.playboy.com](http://www.playboy.com)
- 6 CNN [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)
- 7 MacroMedia [www.macromedia.com](http://www.macromedia.com)
- 8 Windows95 [www.windows95.com](http://www.windows95.com)
- 9 Penthouse [www.penthouse.com](http://www.penthouse.com)
- 10 The New York Times [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

Excluding browsers, online service sites, Internet provider sites, hub search/directory sites. Data by Web 21, breakdown by Yahoo! Internet Life.

## TOP SHAREWARE DOWNLOADS

#### (ZD NET)

1. WinZip 6.2 for Win95/NT file compression program
2. ZD Net's CookieMaster cookie activity monitor
3. CD-Quick Cache 2.01 CD-ROM enhancement software
4. Hey, Macaroni! dancing pasta screen saver
5. 95 Tips, Tricks, and Secrets 1.51 help file
6. PowerToys for Win95 system utilities by Microsoft
7. Active Worlds Browser 1.1 VRML browser
8. Paint Shop Pro 4.12 image editor
9. "Duke Nukem 3D" 1.3d action game
10. "Quake" 1.06 action game

Download at: [www.hotfiles.com/yiltop10.html](http://www.hotfiles.com/yiltop10.html)

#### (CNET)

1. WinZip 6.2 for Win95/NT file compression program
2. "Blood" action game
3. MS Explorer Security Fix security repair patch
4. "Diablo" action game
5. McAfee VirusScan for Win95 antivirus software
6. DirectX Drivers multimedia game tools
7. CleanSweep 3.0 uninstaller
8. MS Internet Explorer 3.01 Internet browser
9. "Mario Bros." VGA 1.0 arcade-style game
10. CNET's MS Internet Explorer Internet browser

Download at: [www.download.com](http://www.download.com)

## GAMES WE'LL NEVER PLAY

The Rogue Market  
[www.roguemarket.com](http://www.roguemarket.com)

The Crack-Buying Game  
[www.bucknell.edu/~truit/intro2~2.html](http://www.bucknell.edu/~truit/intro2~2.html)

Virtual Pooh Sticks  
[pooh.muscat.co.uk/pooh-sticks/](http://pooh.muscat.co.uk/pooh-sticks/)

Virtual Cow Tipping  
[www.epcntr.com/fun/tip\\_game.html](http://www.epcntr.com/fun/tip_game.html)

Whose Milk Mustaches Are These?  
[www.bozell.com/contest/](http://www.bozell.com/contest/)

Guess the Logo  
[www.westwayne.com/gameframe.html](http://www.westwayne.com/gameframe.html)

Guess What We're Advertising Here  
[www.asiaconnect.com.my/bates/advertising/riddle/index.html](http://www.asiaconnect.com.my/bates/advertising/riddle/index.html)



## EXTREEEEEMELY SPECIALIZED SITES

Americans for Cloning Elvis  
[www.geocities.com/Vienna/1673/](http://www.geocities.com/Vienna/1673/)



Brooklyn Cacophony Society  
[www.itp.tsoa.nyu.edu/~student/mc/cacophony/home.html](http://www.itp.tsoa.nyu.edu/~student/mc/cacophony/home.html)

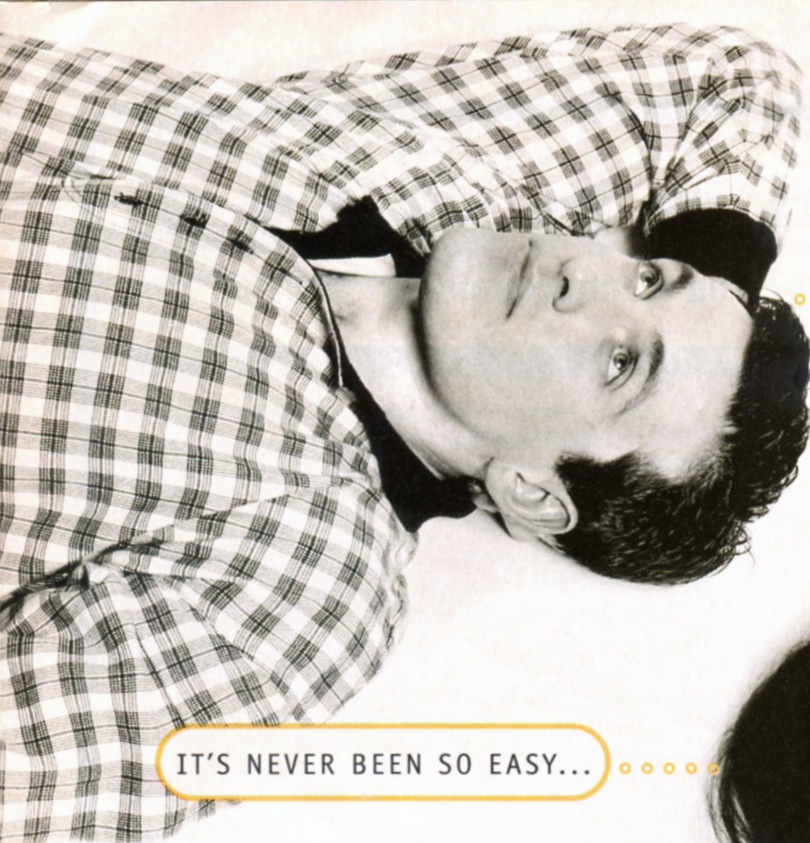
Pasta, Designed by Architects  
[www.archiweb.com/gallery/pasta/index.html](http://www.archiweb.com/gallery/pasta/index.html)

The Plastic Lumber Company  
[www.plasticlumber.com](http://www.plasticlumber.com)

The Shrine to Toast  
[www.teleport.com/~cramsay/shrine.html](http://www.teleport.com/~cramsay/shrine.html)

Driveways of the Rich and Famous  
[www.cris.com/~Driveway/](http://www.cris.com/~Driveway/)





I'M TOTALLY SATISFIED...

IT'S NEVER BEEN SO EASY...



OOOH...MY TOES ARE TINGLY!



[www.great-stuff.com](http://www.great-stuff.com)

In less than five minutes, you can join the Great Stuff Network and be a part of the easiest and most secure commerce community on the net. No additional hardware to buy. No additional software. Just great stuff, for sale, on the web. Totally secure. Totally simple. The Great Stuff Network from Wave Systems Corp.

You can buy stuff, you can sell stuff. It's enough to make you feel good down to your toes.

*Service, support, technical savvy... Get started today in electronic commerce with Wave!*

**Introducing The Great Stuff Network**







## SITE ADDRESS GUIDE

JUNE 1997

Here's your handy, tear-out site address guide to the URLs in this issue. For the complete list, including updates, see our Web site at [www.yil.com](http://www.yil.com).

You can find all the addresses for **Click!** (Pages 10-15) and for our special feature on **Online Chat** (Pages 54-62) at our Web site, [www.yil.com](http://www.yil.com), along with the usual mix of columns and reviews.

**PLUS:** The Guru is IN! Get answers to all those taxing surf problems by writing to our resident Surf Guru at our academy of Webology, Surf School.

### Yippee! / Ya-Hooey (Page 24)

- **CelebSite** [www.celebsite.com](http://www.celebsite.com)
- **Mr. Showbiz** [www.mrshowbiz.com](http://www.mrshowbiz.com)
- **Media History Project** [www.mediahistory.com](http://www.mediahistory.com)
- **The Drudge Report** [www.drudgereport.com](http://www.drudgereport.com)
- **Tribute to the World's Greatest Showman, Liberace!** [www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/1709/index.html](http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/1709/index.html)
- **All Men Must Die** [www.kfs.org/~kashka/ammd.html](http://www.kfs.org/~kashka/ammd.html)
- **Head Lice** [www.headlice.org](http://www.headlice.org)

### For Searchers (Pages 32-33)

- **MedAccess** [www.medaccess.com](http://www.medaccess.com)
- **Medscape** [www.medscape.com](http://www.medscape.com)
- **The Virtual Hospital** [indy.radiology.uiowa.edu/VirtualHospital.html](http://indy.radiology.uiowa.edu/VirtualHospital.html)
- **Your Health Daily** [yourhealthdaily.com](http://yourhealthdaily.com)
- **Reuters Health Information Services** [www.reutershealth.com](http://www.reutershealth.com)
- **The Journal of the American Medical Association** [www.ama-assn.org/public/journals/jama/](http://www.ama-assn.org/public/journals/jama/)
- **Health AtoZ** [www.healthatoz.com](http://www.healthatoz.com)
- **SleepNet** [www.sleepnet.com](http://www.sleepnet.com)
- **Sleep/Insomnia Evaluation Program** [www.proaxis.com/~iris/sleep.html](http://www.proaxis.com/~iris/sleep.html)
- **Ask a Sleep Doc** [nshsleep.com/ask\\_doc.html](http://nshsleep.com/ask_doc.html)
- **Insomnia? Just Go to Sleep and Forget About It** [www.well.com/user/mick/insomnia/](http://www.well.com/user/mick/insomnia/)
- **The U.S. Tax Code** [www.fourmilab.ch/ustax/ustax.html](http://www.fourmilab.ch/ustax/ustax.html)
- **Unified Analysis** [www.limit.com](http://www.limit.com)
- **Constituency Profiles—U.K. Politics** [www.keele.ac.uk/depts/po/table/brit/profile.htm](http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/po/table/brit/profile.htm)
- **Blank.org** [www.blank.org](http://www.blank.org)
- **Square Root of 4** [www.uni-ulm.de/~s\\_ssarst/sqrt4.html](http://www.uni-ulm.de/~s_ssarst/sqrt4.html)
- **Al Gore on Community Empowerment** [www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/OVP/html/Empower.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/OVP/html/Empower.html)

### Cool Tools (Pages 34 & 38)

- **Better Hold Products** [www.grip-it.com](http://www.grip-it.com)
- **Princeton Graphics Systems** [www.pgr.com](http://www.pgr.com)
- **Audio Highway** [www.audiohwy.com](http://www.audiohwy.com)
- **DataLink Systems Corporation** [www.datalink.net](http://www.datalink.net)

### Angela Gunn, Dot.Dot.Dot.Com (Page 43)

- **Lady Vestey Victorian Festival** [www.esu9.k12.ne.us/~superior/vestey.html](http://www.esu9.k12.ne.us/~superior/vestey.html)
- **Hacked page, 2600 magazine** [www.2600.com/hacked\\_pages](http://www.2600.com/hacked_pages)
- **JunkBusters** [www.junkbusters.com](http://www.junkbusters.com)
- **MSN Duckman area** [duckman.msn.com](http://duckman.msn.com)
- **Miss Manners** [underwire.msn.com](http://underwire.msn.com)
- **Indy 500 cybercast** [www.theautochannel.com](http://www.theautochannel.com)
- **Cold Case** [www.coldcase.com](http://www.coldcase.com)
- **AutoConnect** [www.autoconnect.net](http://www.autoconnect.net)

### Nathaniel Wice, Slackers & Hackers (Page 45)

- **Oscar.com** [www.oscar.com](http://www.oscar.com)
- **MTV Online** [mtv.com](http://mtv.com)

### Lisa Kudrow (Pages 50-53)

- **Central Perk** [www.centralperk.com](http://www.centralperk.com)
- **La Hollywood Presents "Friends"** [www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Set/7032/friends.html](http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Set/7032/friends.html)
- **Arthur's "Friends" Page** [www.wco.com/~alin/frquotes.htm](http://www.wco.com/~alin/frquotes.htm)
- **Links for "Friends" Friends** [www.cs.caltech.edu/~adam/LOCAL/friends.html](http://www.cs.caltech.edu/~adam/LOCAL/friends.html)
- **Sherri Slotman's "Friends" Page** [www-personal.umich.edu/~geena/friends.html](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~geena/friends.html)
- **The One by People with Too Much Time on Their Hands** [inp.cie.rpi.edu/cgi-bin/friends](http://inp.cie.rpi.edu/cgi-bin/friends)
- **Phoebe's Greatest Hits** [www3.synet.net/~germ/phbesong.html](http://www3.synet.net/~germ/phbesong.html)
- **Pulp Freinds?** [www.students.uiuc.edu/~jrbenst/TOWTGM.html](http://www.students.uiuc.edu/~jrbenst/TOWTGM.html)

### Old Way / Net Way (Pages 66-67)

- **HomeArts** [homearts.com](http://homearts.com)
- **Maytag Laundry Tips** [www.maytag.com/maytag\\_bin/wash\\_bin/wash\\_tips.html](http://www.maytag.com/maytag_bin/wash_bin/wash_tips.html)
- **The Stain Detective** [www.clothesline.com/stainDet/index.html](http://www.clothesline.com/stainDet/index.html)
- **Hammocks by Rada** [dyred.sureste.com/rada/rada.htm](http://dyred.sureste.com/rada/rada.htm)
- **FinanCenter** [www.financenter.com/newhomes.htm](http://www.financenter.com/newhomes.htm)

### Salon (Pages 72-74)

- **Salon** [www.salonmagazine.com](http://www.salonmagazine.com)
- **Salon** [www.salon1999.com](http://www.salon1999.com)





### The Net Effect of Heaven's Gate (Pages 68-71)

- **W3-design** [www.w3-design.com](http://www.w3-design.com)
- **EarthWeb** [www.earthweb.com](http://www.earthweb.com)
- **Resource Center for Cyberculture Studies** [otal.umd.edu/~rccs/](http://otal.umd.edu/~rccs/)
- **The Communication, Culture, and Technology Program at Georgetown University** [www.georgetown.edu/grad/CCT/](http://www.georgetown.edu/grad/CCT/)
- **Congressional Internet Caucus** [www.house.gov/white/internet\\_caucus/](http://www.house.gov/white/internet_caucus/)

### Touched by the Net (Page 75)

- **ALZwell** [www.alzwell.com](http://www.alzwell.com)
- **Crazy Eddie's Web Giveaway** [members.aol.com/post924/index.htm](http://members.aol.com/post924/index.htm)
- **News from the Czech Republic** [www.columbia.edu/~js322/czech.html](http://www.columbia.edu/~js322/czech.html)
- **Progressive Movie Renting: A Values-Based Video Guide** [www.progressivevideo.org](http://www.progressivevideo.org)
- **Boys and Girls Clubs of Union County** [www.ncnatural.com/UCYOUTH/](http://www.ncnatural.com/UCYOUTH/)

### Dr. Katz - My Doctor Is an Avatar (Pages 76-77)

- **Ask Dr. Love** [www.askdrlove.com](http://www.askdrlove.com)
- **Dr. G Psych-Link** [www.drgpsychlink.com](http://www.drgpsychlink.com)
- **Headworks: Adventures in Inner Space** [www.headworks.com](http://www.headworks.com)
- **Psych-Talk** [www2.psych-talk.com/psych-talk](http://www2.psych-talk.com/psych-talk)
- **The Road** [www.theroad.com.hk](http://www.theroad.com.hk)

### Incredibly Useful Sites (Pages 78-79)

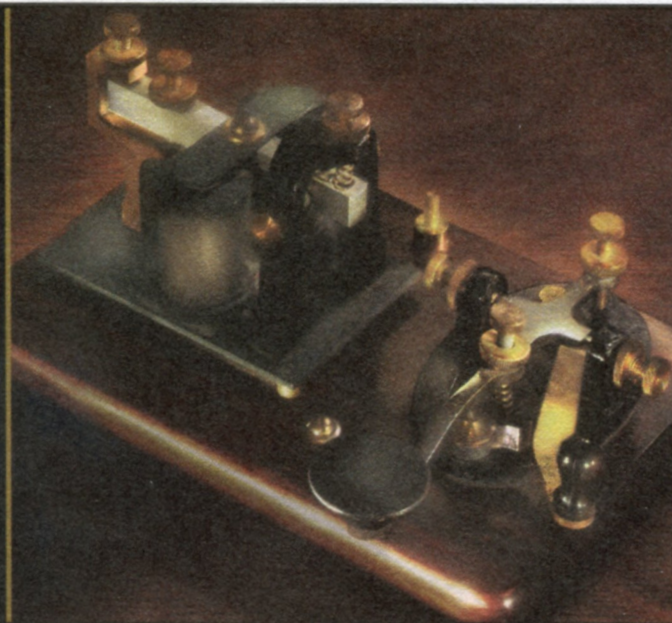
- **Every Possible Way to Say "I Love You"** [www.public.iastate.edu/~abalce/love.html](http://www.public.iastate.edu/~abalce/love.html)

- **Waterparks.com** [www.waterparks.com](http://www.waterparks.com)
- **Drew's Scripts-O-Rama** [home.cdsnet.net/~nikko11/scripts.htm](http://home.cdsnet.net/~nikko11/scripts.htm)
- **IconBAZAAR** [www.iconbazaar.com](http://www.iconbazaar.com)
- **Fertilitext** [www.fertilitext.org](http://www.fertilitext.org)
- **Virtual Relocation** [www.virtualrelocation.com/state.html](http://www.virtualrelocation.com/state.html)
- **No Brainer Blinds & Shades** [www.nobrainersblinds.com/useful.html](http://www.nobrainersblinds.com/useful.html)
- **CalendarLand** [www.juneau.com/home/janice/calendarland/](http://www.juneau.com/home/janice/calendarland/)
- **TieGuide** [www.fashionmall.com/media/mr/doc/howtotie.htm](http://www.fashionmall.com/media/mr/doc/howtotie.htm)

### The Gay Connection (Pages 80-83)

- **Digital Queers** [www.dq.org](http://www.dq.org)
- **Queer Resources Directory** [www.qrd.org](http://www.qrd.org)
- **I/g/b/t/ index** [www.yahoo.com/Society\\_and\\_Culture/Lesbians\\_Gays\\_and\\_Bisexuals](http://www.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Lesbians_Gays_and_Bisexuals)
- **Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays** [www.critpath.org/pflag-talk/](http://www.critpath.org/pflag-talk/)
- **National Lesbian and Gay Task Force** [www.nglft.org](http://www.nglft.org)
- **National Directory of Lesbian and Gay Community Centers** [www.gaycenter.org:80/natctr/index.html](http://www.gaycenter.org:80/natctr/index.html)
- **Gay.Net** [www.gaynet.com](http://www.gaynet.com)
- **Persimmon's Radical Faerie Home Page** [www.eskimo.com/~davidk/faeries/faeries.html](http://www.eskimo.com/~davidk/faeries/faeries.html)
- **OutBox** [www.outbox.com](http://www.outbox.com)
- **The LesBiGay Parenting HomePage** [www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/3378/](http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/3378/)
- **Gay Men's Spirituality Home Page** [www.the-park.com/barzan/main.htm](http://www.the-park.com/barzan/main.htm)
- **Gay Male S/M Activists** [www.ability.net/gmsma/](http://www.ability.net/gmsma/)
- **PlanetOut** [www.planetout.com](http://www.planetout.com)

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- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** [www.cdcnac.org](http://www.cdcnac.org)
- **The National Library of Medicine** [gopher://gopher.nlm.nih.gov/11/aids](http://gopher://gopher.nlm.nih.gov/11/aids)
- **AIDS Research Information Center** [www.critpath.org/aric/pwarg-08.htm](http://www.critpath.org/aric/pwarg-08.htm)
- **Emory University's Medweb HIV & AIDS site** [www.gen.emory.edu/medweb/medweb.aids.html](http://www.gen.emory.edu/medweb/medweb.aids.html)
- **American Association for Advancement of Science AIDSLINK** [www.aaas.org/science/aidslink.htm](http://www.aaas.org/science/aidslink.htm)
- **Project Inform** [www.projinf.org](http://www.projinf.org)
- **AIDS Treatment news** [www.aidsnews.org/atnid2.html](http://www.aidsnews.org/atnid2.html)
- **AIDS Resource List** [www.teleport.com/~celinec/aids.shtm](http://www.teleport.com/~celinec/aids.shtm)
- **Treatment Action Group** [www.thebody.com/tag/tagpage.html](http://www.thebody.com/tag/tagpage.html)
- **Center for AIDS Prevention Studies (University of California-SF)** [www.caps.ucsf.edu/capsweb/](http://www.caps.ucsf.edu/capsweb/)
- **Rural Center for AIDS/STD Prevention: A Joint Project of Indiana University & Purdue University** [www.indiana.edu/~aids/](http://www.indiana.edu/~aids/)
- **Gay Men Fighting AIDS** [www.users.dircon.co.uk/~eking/gmfa.htm](http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~eking/gmfa.htm)
- **The Yahoo! page on AIDS** [www.yahoo.com/Health/Diseases\\_and\\_Conditions/AIDS\\_HIV/](http://www.yahoo.com/Health/Diseases_and_Conditions/AIDS_HIV/)
- **Safer sex page** [safersex.org](http://safersex.org)
- **Gay Men's Health Crisis** [www.gmhc.org](http://www.gmhc.org)
- **Centers for Disease Control National AIDS Clearinghouse** [www.cdcnac.org](http://www.cdcnac.org)
- **Community Prescription Service** [www.prescript.com](http://www.prescript.com)

#### New, Notable and Fun (Pages 84-85)

- **CountrySong.com** [www.countrySong.com](http://www.countrySong.com)
- **Seeing Ear Theatre** [www.scifi.com/pulp/set/](http://www.scifi.com/pulp/set/)
- **Engage** [engagegames.com](http://engagegames.com)
- **BigShot** [www.spe.sony.com/Pictures/tv/bigshot/](http://www.spe.sony.com/Pictures/tv/bigshot/)
- **The Gap** [www.gap.com](http://www.gap.com)
- **Better Homes and Gardens** [www.betterhomesandgardens.com](http://www.betterhomesandgardens.com)

- **RobbReport** [www.robreport.com](http://www.robreport.com)
- **alt.culture** [www.altculture.com](http://www.altculture.com)
- **<boldtype>** [www.boldtype.com](http://www.boldtype.com)
- **Invention Management On-Line** [www.adlenterprises.com/default.htm](http://www.adlenterprises.com/default.htm)
- **Getting Real** [www.gettingreal.com](http://www.gettingreal.com)
- **AdOne** [www.adone.com](http://www.adone.com)
- **reveries** [www.reveries.com](http://www.reveries.com)
- **Maxima New Media** [www.maxnm.com](http://www.maxnm.com)
- **AprilFools.com** [www.aprilfools.com](http://www.aprilfools.com)
- **Sports Celebrity Network** [www.sportspin.com](http://www.sportspin.com)
- **The Station** [www.station.sony.com](http://www.station.sony.com)
- **Wacky.com** [wacky.com](http://wacky.com)
- **Channel A** [www.channela.com](http://www.channela.com)
- **Aardvark Pet Supplies** [www.aardvarkpet.com](http://www.aardvarkpet.com)
- **Fodor's Travel Show** [www.fodors.com/radio/](http://www.fodors.com/radio/)
- **GoCollege** [www.gocollege.com](http://www.gocollege.com)
- **Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society** [www.hias.org](http://www.hias.org)

#### "The Best" of Web Site Reviews Guest Review: Wine (Pages 86-87)

- **Robin Garr's Wine Lovers Page** [www.iglou.com/why/wine.html](http://www.iglou.com/why/wine.html)
- **Slow Food Guide To Wines of the World** [www.veronafiere.it/slowwines](http://www.veronafiere.it/slowwines)

#### Getting Hitched (Page 88)

- **I Thee Web** [hollywoodandvine.com/ltheeweb/index.html](http://hollywoodandvine.com/ltheeweb/index.html)
- **GlamOrama Wedding Chapel** [www.glamorama.com/wed/](http://www.glamorama.com/wed/)
- **Way Cool Weddings** [tribeca.ios.com/~whitey/waycool/](http://tribeca.ios.com/~whitey/waycool/)
- **unGROOM'd** [www.ungroomd.com](http://www.ungroomd.com)
- **The T&C Wedding Registry** [tncweddings.com/index.html](http://tncweddings.com/index.html)

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- **Fastball** [www.fastball.com](http://www.fastball.com)

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### Buying a New Computer (Page 90)

- **ZD Net** [www.zdnet.com](http://www.zdnet.com)
- **PC World Online** [www.pcworld.com](http://www.pcworld.com)

### Encyclopedias (Page 91)

- **Britannica Online** [www.eb.com](http://www.eb.com)
- **Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia Online** [gme.grolier.com](http://gme.grolier.com)

### Keeping Up with New Web Sites (Page 92)

- **Webcrawler Select: New Sites This Week** [webcrawler.com/select/nunu.new.html](http://webcrawler.com/select/nunu.new.html)
- **Yahoo!—What's New** [www.yahoo.com/new/](http://www.yahoo.com/new/)
- **What's New on Yahoo!igans!** [www.yahoo!igans.com/new/index.html](http://www.yahoo!igans.com/new/index.html)

### Germany (Page 93)

- **Exploring Germany** [www.commed.de/germany/home.html](http://www.commed.de/germany/home.html)
- **Bavaria Alpine Net Guide** [www.bavaria.com](http://www.bavaria.com)

### Ska (Page 94)

- **The Ska FAQ** [www.twillis.com/ska/faq/](http://www.twillis.com/ska/faq/)
- **Ska-Tastrophe** [www.iag.net/~bogner/skatast.html](http://www.iag.net/~bogner/skatast.html)

### Horror Films (Pages 95-96)

- **Lost Highway** [www.lost-highway.com](http://www.lost-highway.com)
- **Aliens: The Web Site** [www.vis-con.com/aliens/](http://www.vis-con.com/aliens/)
- **The Hellbound Web** [www-personal.umich.edu/~rexerm/hell/](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~rexerm/hell/)

### Investing News (Page 97)

- **The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition** [www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com)
- **The Street** [www.thestreet.com](http://www.thestreet.com)

### Celebrity News (Pages 98-99)

- **Mr. Showbiz** [www.mrshowbiz.com](http://www.mrshowbiz.com)
- **E! Online** [www.eonline.com](http://www.eonline.com)
- **Cyber-Sleaze** [metaverse.com/vibe/sleaze/index.html](http://metaverse.com/vibe/sleaze/index.html)

### Relieving Misery on the Job (Page 100)

- **Disgruntled** [www.disgruntled.com/dishome.html](http://www.disgruntled.com/dishome.html)
- **The Dilbert Zone** [www.dilbert.com](http://www.dilbert.com)

### Sports for Kids (Page 101)

- **Sports Illustrated for Kids** [www.sikids.com](http://www.sikids.com)

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- **WWW Bike Repair Shop** [www.uidaho.edu/~baile934/](http://www.uidaho.edu/~baile934/)

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- **The Dirt Museum** [www.planet.com/dirtweb/dirt.html](http://www.planet.com/dirtweb/dirt.html)
- **"Squirrel Hazing: The Untold Story"** [web.wt.net/~psherr/squirrel\\_hazing.htm](http://web.wt.net/~psherr/squirrel_hazing.htm)
- **The Amazing 8,000 Wives Program!** [www.ugcs.caltech.edu/~jonathan/8000wives.html](http://www.ugcs.caltech.edu/~jonathan/8000wives.html)
- **"Simon Says"** [free.like.it/~maydelah/simon.htm](http://free.like.it/~maydelah/simon.htm)

Don't forget to check out our own Web site at [www.yil.com](http://www.yil.com). With columns, weekly roundups of the best and worst of the Web, contests, and Surf School ([www.yil.com/filters/surfjump.html](http://www.yil.com/filters/surfjump.html)), the ultimate Net manual for beginners and veterans alike, we think you'll agree that there is even more to **Yahoo! Internet Life** than this magazine!

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# YIPPEE!



## THE INTERNET IN THE GRANDER SCHEME

[www.mediahistory.com](http://www.mediahistory.com)

Anyone who has ever pondered the Web's place in history should bookmark the Media History Project, where director Kristina Ross has pulled together hundreds of links to the history of film, radio, photography, advertising, comics, journalism, television, and computing. Browse around, and you will come to a set of indispensable time lines covering not only the history of communications but also the history of the Internet. You may be surprised to find out just how far back the entries go: the first is from 1957. This site is a work in progress—a media experiment in and of itself—and Ross issues an open invitation for contributions to its ever-growing archives. A noble effort, indeed.

## WHERE DID GOLDIE HAWN GO TO COLLEGE?

[www.celebsite.com](http://www.celebsite.com)

[www.mrshowbiz.com](http://www.mrshowbiz.com)

Now coming down the red carpet is CelebSite, brought to you by the same people who produce the popular Mr. Showbiz site. Pick a star from its directory of hundreds, and you will find photos, biographies, vital stats, current news headlines about the star in question, and, best of all, a guide to other Web sites devoted to that star. CelebSite experts have already gone to the trouble of checking out the sites for you and writing up little descriptions, so you know you are only getting the best Goldie Hawn links (2) and not the weird, obsessive ones (lots).



BROWN/OUTLINE

## "THE DRUDGE REPORT HAS LEARNED..."

[www.drudgereport.com](http://www.drudgereport.com)

This guy seems to have spies on every street corner—and boy, do they talk! Matthew Drudge issues daily insider reports from both Hollywood and Washington, and for the truly current-events-addicted, his one-page collection of links covers virtually every important news wire, Op-Ed columnist, and media outlet in the country. Larry King? Check. Phyllis Schlafly? Here. Maureen Dowd? Present. Also included are a news search tool to let you dig through clippings from the recent past and, because it's the Net, links to up-to-the-minute earthquake reports from leading institutions of seismology.

# YA-HOOEY!



## LAMÉ OR JUST LAME

[www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/1709/index.html](http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/1709/index.html)

We are all for keeping the memory of Liberace alive; America could use a little more unabashed showmanship these days. But this tribute suffers from some *really* bad judgment calls, such as the inclusion of a teeth-tingling MIDI rendition of "Send in the Clowns." Equally bad are the typos, the most hilarious of which is "November 22, 1963, while the world was stunned by U.S. President Kennedy's *assnigation*, Liberace collapsed on stage suffering from renal failure."



HAMILTON/GLOBE PHOTOS

## SOME OF US ARE NOT AMUSED

[www.kfs.org/~kashka/ammd.html](http://www.kfs.org/~kashka/ammd.html)

"Get a gun, get a man!" shrieks All Men Must Die, and while all the Joe Six-Packs out there run for cover, the site's hostess with the mostest, Kashka, rails on and on about the worthlessness of men. Apparently the whole thing started when she broke up with her boyfriend, Mike. (Thanks a lot, Mike.) Now men can ask to be spared Kashka's wrath only by filling out her "Beg Like a Dog" form. Of course, most of the guys who have gone to the trouble have turned out to be perverts with surprisingly colorful vocabularies, so all in all, the site just devolves into an international exercise in bad taste. At least the men of the world have been warned.

## YES, THERE'S A WEB SITE FOR EVERYTHING

[www.headlice.org](http://www.headlice.org)

All the latest head lice news is available for your reading pleasure at Head Lice, a site sponsored by the National Pediculosis Association (yes, there's an association for everything, too). This chillingly comprehensive site sounds the alarm about infestations of the little critters in schools and includes everything

from magnified photos of lice egg sacs (gulp!) to 12 questions and answers about scabies (gulp!). Spend enough time at this site, and home-schooling will start to seem like a fantastic idea.



PATTERNOTTE/GLOBE



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2. Roll up magazine and grip tightly in hand. Note: Avoid throwing the bat after you swing. It can inflict some nasty paper cuts on the fans.



3. Recruit between 1 and 17 other players. Choose sides using "eenie-meenie" method. Negotiate players' contracts, if necessary.



4. All rules of outdoor baseball apply. And yes, spitting on the ground is not only expected, it's encouraged.

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BY CHARLES ROGERS

**Netscape and Microsoft both have launched new Internet suites that will change your idea of what e-mail can do. Get ready for messages that move and talk**

E-mail is the world's most popular Internet tool; if you want to rule the Net, you must dominate the e-mail market. Unfortunately for Microsoft, e-mail has always been its weakest subject: Exchange was clunky, Inbox clunkier still. MSN's e-mail functions are actually painful to use.

With Internet Explorer 4.0, however, Microsoft has nearly pulled even with Netscape. Much of the progress it has made has been simply in matching already existing Netscape Mail features—but they *have* matched them, and that's what counts. Microsoft owns the desktop, and it gives Internet Explorer away for free. So, in this game, Microsoft looks strong.

While Netscape and Microsoft seem to be going their separate ways with their browsers—ActiveX vs. Java, competing versions of HTML—they are using the same playbook when it comes to e-mail. Perhaps the playbook belongs to a third company—Eudora, maybe, who knows?—but both IE4 and Netscape's Communicator share a long list of remarkably similar new features.

- ◆ Both products now use a single window for e-mail and newsgroups (although Netscape insists on calling it by two different names, Messenger and Collabra).

- ◆ Both allow you to sort messages into folders or other mailboxes. In case something gets mislaid, both also allow you to search by any criteria: name, date, topic, keyword, etc. IE4 even allows you to reply automatically with a form letter.

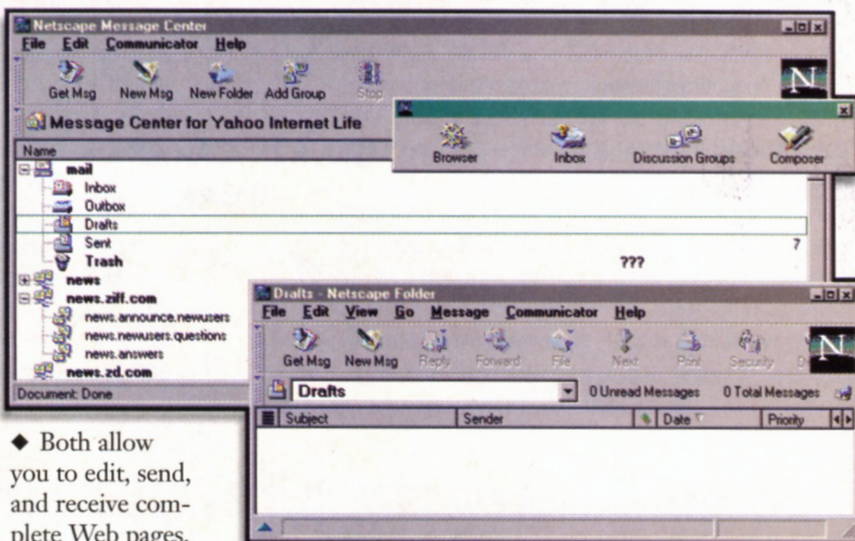
- ◆ Both now allow you to fetch messages from multiple mailboxes, even multiple service providers (America Online says its mail will be compatible soon). This makes it easy for family

members to download mail. It also means that you can get your e-mail on both your laptop and your desktop.

- ◆ Both Communicator and IE4 can tap into corporate phone books or Internet databases without launching a browser. Both will add names easily to your personal phone book when you send or receive messages. You can type in someone's name and this feature will search your personal directory first, then the corporate directory, then the Net until it finds a match, and it can grab the e-mail address and other information.

- ◆ Both programs allow you to receive Web page updates in your e-mail (IE4 calls it "subscriptions," Netscape uses "inbox direct"). Netscape has the page owners send fresh pages to you; IE4 will go and get them itself.

IT IS EASY TO GET THE IMPRESSION that Communicator and IE4 are absolutely identical, but they are not. Netscape is still innovating, adding a spell-checker to Messenger/Collabra, and allowing you to save drafts of messages, create private newsgroups,



- ◆ Both allow you to edit, send, and receive complete Web pages, including animation and sound files, and the links can be launched directly from e-mail. If you want to e-mail someone a Web page, just drag it to mail and hit "send."

- ◆ Both programs let you search messages first and download later, so you can skim your e-mail quickly and decide what to download, or search e-mail or newsgroups for a specific topic without having to wade through every message and post.

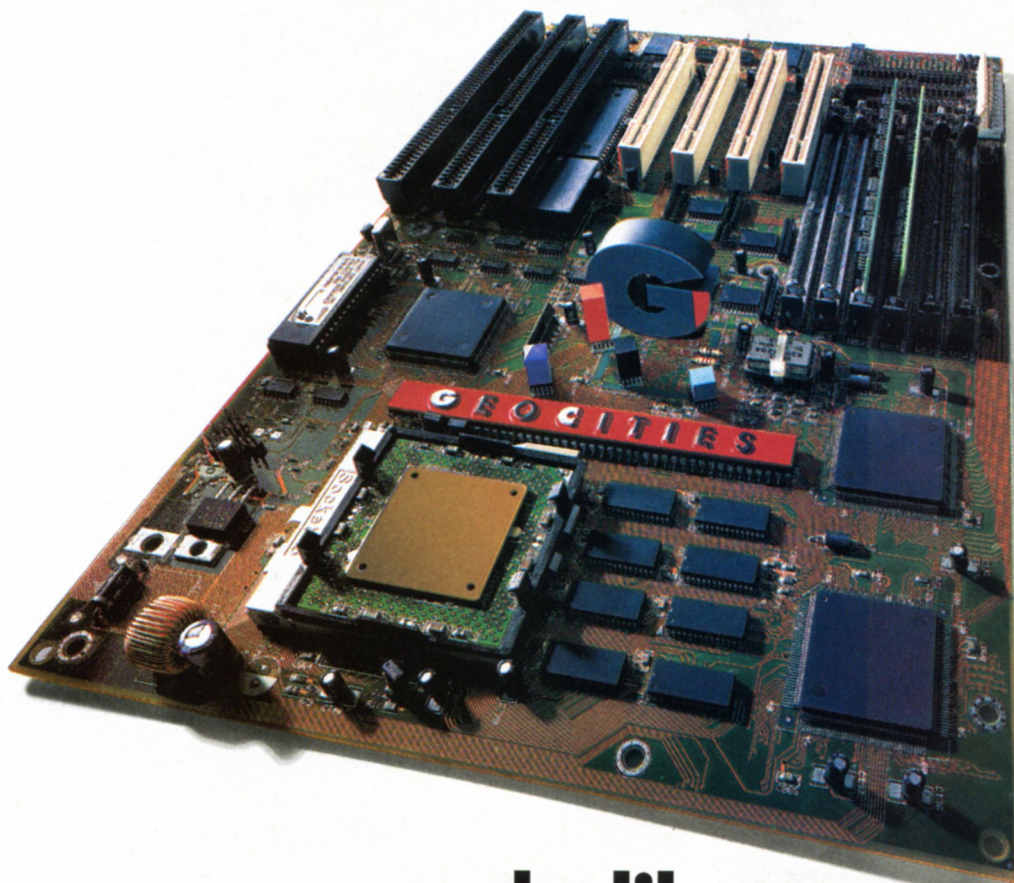
- ◆ Both programs now include one-click encryption.

and give them easy-to-understand names (instead of ones like "98.short.term"). And Microsoft has a few tweaks of its own. But there are really only two points you need to know about the new browsers:

1. Both Communicator and Internet Explorer 4.0 are worth downloading, simply for the new e-mail features.
2. There are still skirmishes to be fought in the browser wars but, for the time being, it looks like Microsoft is gaining.



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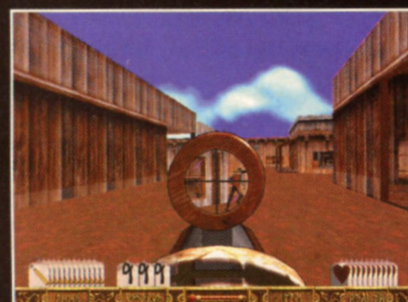
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[www.lucasarts.com](http://www.lucasarts.com)



BY CHARLES ROGERS

Netscape's new Communicator is faster, lighter, and more stable than the earliest version 4.0 of Microsoft Internet Explorer. But is it better? Click here.

Within five minutes of setting up Microsoft's new Internet Explorer 4.0 on a test computer, *Yahoo! Internet Life's* associate Web editor had converted the desktop background into the YIL.com home page. "Hmm," he said. Five minutes later he had the Web site's table of contents stretched across the bottom of the screen. He then made it scroll, a little like the news ticker at Times Square.

"Wait," he said, taking another minute to turn each item into a working link to pages on the site. He stared at it for a moment. "Well, then," he said, pointing at the screen. "They win." As he headed back to his office, he called out to *Yahoo! Internet Life's* Web designer, "Hey, Tony! Microsoft wins."

Netscape was first to hop in this billion-dollar game of leapfrog. It released the heir to Navigator, a suite of Internet products called Communicator.

Although it has a variety of new components—including white boarding, voice-conferencing, and chat—and it has been beefed up and cleaned up, it is recognizably Navigator.

But when Microsoft's turn came a few months later, its leap took Internet Explorer almost out of sight.

The big news, of course, is Active Desktop, the IE4 (and Win97) feature

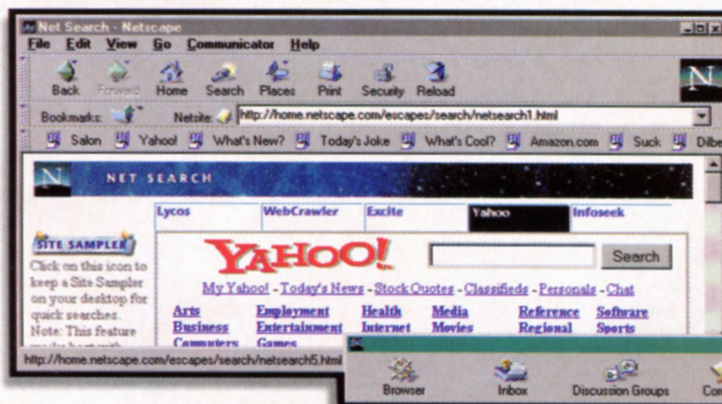
that combines Internet Explorer and Windows Explorer. Now you can find the Web almost wherever you feel like looking: on your desktop, on your start menu, and on your taskbar. Essentially, Active Desktop allows you

Microsoft has also added a "lite" off-line browser to IE4 that works surprisingly well. Based around a feature called "subscriptions," the off-line browser monitors your favorite sites and lets you know when they are updated. In fact, the last incarnation of Netscape could do as much, but if you use subscriptions in conjunction with IE4's screen saver, it will check your favorite sites, download them, and display the new pages for you to skim through. The whole package—active desktop, off-line browser, and screen saver—means everyone will have built-in software that works like a simple version of PointCast, but with thousands of channels and without the commercials.

Netscape has vowed to introduce its own upgrade by the end of summer, and maybe its version will be even better—but for right now, it is playing defense.

Netscape enthusiasts dismiss IE4's

most obvious changes as bug-ridden eye-candy—and they are right, in part. We found Communicator to be substantially faster than IE4, less prone to crashing, and, at half the size, much easier on the hard drive. What we found most annoying about IE4 is its close connection with the desktop; when the program crashes,






it takes the whole screen with it, and you are forced to reboot.

While Microsoft has been adding unproven technology to IE4, Netscape has invested in honing Communicator. A number of common surfing tasks are much easier. For example, Netscape recently announced that it has teamed with most of the major search engines—Yahoo!, Excite, Lycos, Infoseek—to offer a search page specifically designed to use the latest Communicator features. If you type in a Web address that Communicator doesn't recognize, it will automatically do a search and suggest a match. Helper programs (such as plug-ins) install themselves automatically. Back and Forward buttons display a pop-up list of visited sites.

Almost everything that Navigator did, Communicator does a little faster or a little better. With Communicator, families or small-business people who share a computer now can set up multiple browser profiles so each person can have their own bookmarks, toolbars, and mailbox. Also, personalizing Communicator—adding a bookmark, putting a frequently visited Web site on the toolbar—is now a single-click operation.

Communicator is a good upgrade, but in spite of all its small refinements, it is just an upgrade. Even accounting for the inclusion of content from ABC News, CNNfn, CBS Sportsline, Time Warner, Hotwired and Hearst New Media via Netscape's brand new push component, Netcaster, which was announced just before this magazine went to press, the software needs to be noticeably better for Net surfers to find it, download it, install it, and, in some cases, pay for it. If the new browser is not clearly the superior product, people will take neither the trouble nor the time—because in the near future, when users buy a PC, it's going to come with Internet Explorer 4.0 pre-installed and ready to run, with MSN as the Internet Service Provider. And, perhaps just long enough to break Netscape, it will be free. 



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BY JACLYN LIEBER

Can the greatest cause of insomnia also hold the cure? One Netly night owl finds the sites that promise a good night's sleep

**W**ide awake again. It's 2.45 a.m., and in the past four hours I have purchased three ab-rollers, two Chia pets, and one Ginsu knife. I've done the bath thing, the warm milk thing, the call-everyone-I-know-on-the-West-Coast thing. I've taken the midnight snack to new heights of culinary excess, and I'm fairly certain there are exactly 2,422 sheep in my head.

Desperate for just about any strategy to help me beat this insomnia, I think about the only advice department I know is open all night. Do I dare log on? Granted, the Internet has become the single biggest sleep impediment since the advent of electricity—but hey, the lightbulb was never in the business of doling out information. Besides, as noted, we're talking true desperation.

Clearly I don't have all night—not if there is any hope of being remotely coherent at my 9 a.m. meeting. This time, I can't afford to get caught in the Web. Plus, this is serious stuff—sure, it's possible that Shreveport Billy Joe's personal sleep-inducing strategy will work wonders for me as well, but it's just as possible I'll still be doing headstands against my mirror at 5 a.m.

The challenge: to find as much objective, reliable information on insomnia as I can in the shortest amount of time. The rules: no search engines, no newsgroups, no homegrown Web pages. I shall turn the lights out at 3:45 a.m. exactly. Ready? Go.

### 3:00 a.m. Hit the Bookmarks

This is not the time to go where no man has gone before. I avoid the big search engines, which undoubtedly would spit back more information on this topic than my "wired" brain could handle at the moment (I mean, the bulk of the Internet was probably built by insomniacs). Right now I want to avoid

roots of insomnia and pick up a few doctor-approved remedies.

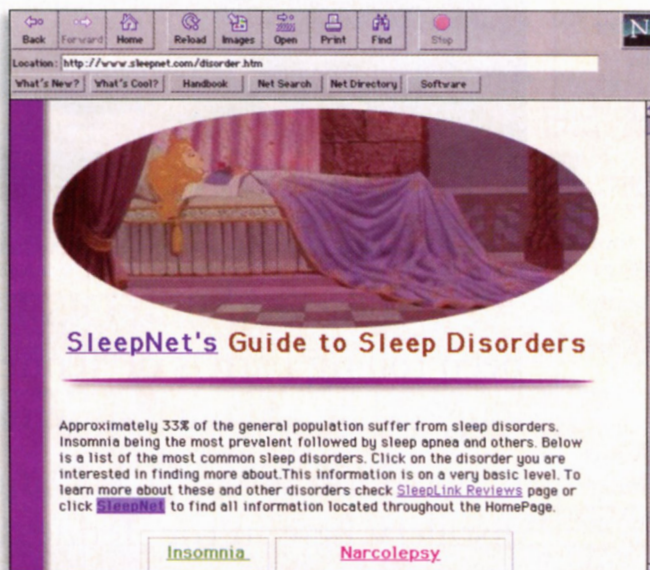
The meds come through for me. Pulling up articles on this topic turns out to be as simple as plugging the keyword "insomnia" into each of these site's search engines.

In The Virtual Hospital's patient section I find "What to Do When You Can't Sleep," from the *Iowa Health*

*Book*, reviewed by the American Academy of Family Physicians. It describes some of the possible causes of insomnia and provides tips for preventing it (e.g., regulate your bedtime, don't exercise right before going to bed). Medscape has an even more extensive article on sleep disorders from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other government agencies, reviewed by a long list of sleep experts. Topics include "Insomnia: A Symptom, Not an Illness" and "Sleep Hygiene: A First Move

Against Insomnia." MedAccess offers "OTC Options: Help for the Sleepless," by Food and Drug Administration staffer Marian Segal, which discusses the types of drugs found in typical over-the-counter sleep medications as well as the different types of insomnia (transient, short-term, and chronic). I am scared wide-awake by the fact that about one in three adults is affected by chronic insomnia. Time to move on.

Next stop: the media. I hit a few sources devoted solely to health news, including Your Health Daily ([yourhealthdaily.com](http://yourhealthdaily.com)), Reuters Health



companies selling their sleep panaceas and Sigmund Freud wanna-bes practicing their skills. Instead, I stick to sites that either I've used successfully in the past or that come highly recommended from friends, Web reviews, etc. In other words, Sally's Sleep, Siesta, and Snooze Page are out.

I start with a few of the well-respected Net providers of health and medical information, including MedAccess ([www.medaccess.com](http://www.medaccess.com)), Medscape ([www.medscape.com](http://www.medscape.com)), and The Virtual Hospital ([indy.radiology.uiowa.edu/VirtualHospital.html](http://indy.radiology.uiowa.edu/VirtualHospital.html)). My goal is to gain some medical insight into the



And if you are still having trouble getting your rest, here are a few unintentionally sleep-inducing sites to help you scroll off.

[www.fourmilab.ch/ustax/ustax.html](http://www.fourmilab.ch/ustax/ustax.html)

What could be better than thousands of pages of featureless text on a flat gray background? Don't miss Chapter 23a, the Railroad Unemployment Repayment Tax.

www.limit.com

One of the many theoretical mathematics sites that are handy sleep inducers. When you really need some shut-eye, try this: "In the following pages we will explore a new point of view on the calculus, inspired by the realization that a stronger definition of the limit can banish divergence from the logical foundations of the subject."

[www.keele.ac.uk/depts/po/table/brit/  
profile.htm](http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/po/table/brit/profile.htm)

The Web stretches beyond any one nation, and languor-creators can be found in many lands. Reading about local U.K. constituencies and election results are a wonderful way to experience the cross-cultural nature of insomnia.

[www.blank.org](http://www.blank.org)

As the site says, "Blank is beautiful." An entire domain devoted to blank pages and only blank pages.

[www.uni-ulm.de/~s\\_ssarst/sqrt4.html](http://www.uni-ulm.de/~s_ssarst/sqrt4.html)

This site lists the square root of 4 to the 500,000th decimal. The answer is, of course, 2, so the site looks like this:  
2.000000000000000000000000000000000000...

[www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/OVP/html/Empower.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/OVP/html/Empower.html)

For those who thought there was no hope, the phrase "Tonight on C-SPAN, the vice president" is pure salvation. The Web-savvy vice president has contributed much to curing insomnia, and this may be his finest hour.

Information Services ([www.reutershealth.com](http://www.reutershealth.com)), and *The Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) ([www.ama-assn.org/public/journals/jama/](http://www.ama-assn.org/public/journals/jama/)). Your Health Daily, which is part of The New York Times Syndicate and requires users to register (free), is especially helpful, with reports on the overuse of sleep aids and the connection between regular exercise and good sleep. I also find a number of articles with strong warnings about melatonin, the latest rage in miracle sleep aids, and one about the inconsistency and inaccuracy of some Internet-based health information in general. My fears have been validated.

To identify credible sites devoted exclusively to sleep-related topics, I use a health site index that I know and trust. Health AtoZ ([www.healthatoz.com](http://www.healthatoz.com)) indexes and describes health-related Web sites and indicates whether they are targeted to consumers or professionals. (This particular feature is very helpful in avoiding papers on the "Psycho-Scientific Influences of Sleep Withdrawal.") Some, though not all, of the sites listed here are rated. I find a category on sleep disorders lurking under the broader heading "Mental Health-Diseases and Conditions" (they certainly take this insomnia thing seriously!). One site that sounds right up my alley is SleepNet ([www.sleepnet.com](http://www.sleepnet.com)). I settle in to explore.

SleepNet, which has the tag line "Everything you wanted to know about sleep disorders but were too tired to ask," has the ambitious goal of organizing all known Internet sleep information in one place for easy access. It has some original content, but consists primarily of links to professional organizations, sleep labs, articles, recent news items, support groups, etc., covering all types of sleep disorders, including those that sound a lot more serious than what I've got (e.g., of the narcolepsy and sleep apnea variety). The best thing about SleepNet is its reviews of other

sleep sites, complete with ratings of one to five owls (get it?). With SleepNet's guidance I can weed out the tiresome sites from the sleepers.

Highly recommended is the Sleep/Insomnia Evaluation Program ([www.proaxis.com/~iris/sleep.html](http://www.proaxis.com/~iris/sleep.html)), a questionnaire that evaluates sleep impairment and reviews possible causes. Unfortunately, due to the overwhelming number of submissions received (most submitted in the wee hours of the morning, it is noted), they are no longer accepting the questionnaires online and sending personalized responses, but instead recommend that users fill out the text version and bring it to a health-care provider. The five-owl award also goes to Ask a Sleep Doc ([nshsleep.com/ask\\_doc.html](http://nshsleep.com/ask_doc.html)), aka the sleep specialists at Northside Hospital Sleep Disorders Center in

Atlanta. E-mail your question and the sleep docs make "every effort" to respond within 24 hours.

But in the end it's the three-owl *Insomnia? Just Go to Sleep and Forget About It* ([www.well.com/user/mick/insomnia/](http://www.well.com/user/mick/insomnia/)) that does the trick. Its 19 "techniques you've probably already tried but are still worth trying again" include many I have indeed tried, but the site's take on counting sheep makes a lot of sense (jumping sheep are eschewed in favor of those sleeping peacefully in a green meadow). The one that ultimately works for me falls under the listing of more obscure sleep ideas: "Visualize something boring."

At 3:45 a.m. I lie in my bed, close my eyes, and picture myself sitting in front of my computer, waiting for page after page after page to download. Voilà! Mission accomplished. Who knew bandwidth problems would ever come in so handy?

*Jaclyn Lieber is content manager of FINDOUT ([www.findout.com](http://www.findout.com)).*



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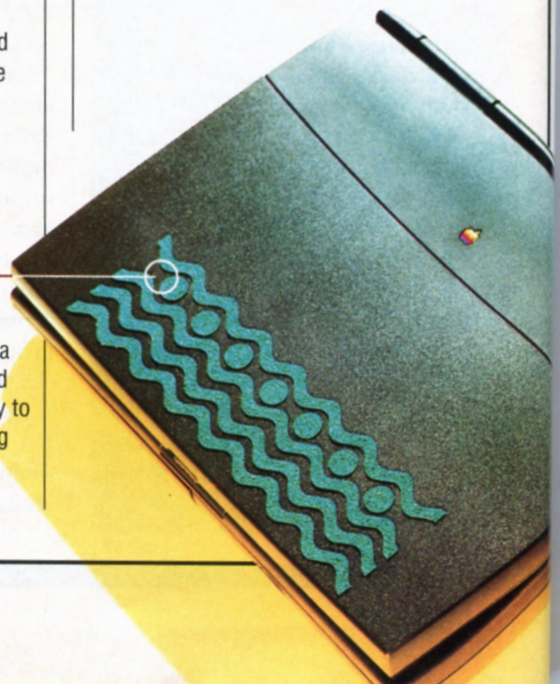
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# Best Consumer Digital Camera

(MacUser Eddy Awards, Jan. '97)

## Product of the Year

(InfoWorld, Jan. '97)

### Stellar

(Windows Sources, Jan. '97)



(ComputerLife, Feb. '97)



## Any questions?

**Plenty. How many pictures does the D-200L take?**

Up to 80.

**You're not sure?**

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**Where?**

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**What's the resolution?**

640 x 480. But you're not buying a pixel taker. It's pictures you're after. And

picture quality is where the D-200L really outperforms the competition.

**Who says?**

*InfoWorld*, for one: "The image quality far surpassed any of the other digital cameras." And *Windows Sources*: "It delivers the best images we've seen from a consumer-level camera."

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You'll discover even more reasons why the dynamic ViewSonic monitors are the big ones you don't want to let get away.

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CRT Size (Viewable)	17" (16.0")	17" (16.0")	21" (20.0")
Dot Pitch	.27mm	.27mm	.25mm
Horizontal Frequency	30-69kHz	30-69kHz	30-89kHz
Maximum Resolution	1,280 x 1,024	1,280 x 1,024	1,600 x 1,200
Optimum Resolution	1,024 x 768	1,024 x 768	1,024 x 768
Refresh Rate	86Hz	86Hz	109Hz
Macintosh® Compatible	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Windows® 95 <i>Plug &amp; Play</i> ™	Yes	Yes	Yes
On-Screen Control	Yes	Yes	Yes
Limited 3 Year Warranty	Parts, Labor, CRT	Parts, Labor, CRT	Parts, Labor, CRT

\* Free Macintosh adapter available upon request.



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ViewSonic G810  
January 1997



ViewSonic G810  
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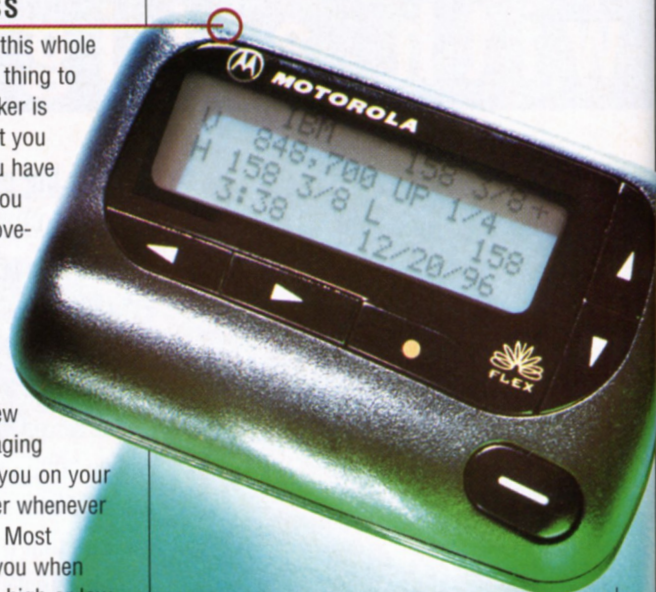
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# Avatars of the Here-and-Now

William Gibson's words are themselves virtual worlds



William Gibson doesn't do e-mail. My guess is he's moved beyond it. He might not even

own a computer, in the same sense that a Ferrari driver might not own a mule. To be locked into today's online technology is to be locked out of its future. Gibson, who coined the term "cyberspace" in *Neuromancer* (Ace Books, 1994), continues to imagine it; he writes about how it would feel to occupy virtual mindscapes—not games, but scenarios with consequences and outcomes.

If you read Gibson's latest novel, *Idoru* (Putnam, 1996), you will experience virtual reality (VR) in dimensions unimagined by today's clunky VR technology. The novel is about a man who falls in love with an *idoru*—a woman created by a computer program. Reading the novel and imagining the woman, I realized the most advanced speculation about VR is being done with fiction.

Is this cheating? By definition, virtual reality is source-independent, because if it works, we are not aware of how it is generated. Books can tell us where VR will go and how it will feel when it gets there. For years to come, the VR created in books will be more convincing than any created on a machine.

Now about that *idoru*. If the Turing Test of Artificial Intelligence is a computer program that can make you believe, 80 percent of the time, that it is another person, then let us propose the

Gibson Test of Virtual Reality: a computer program that can make you believe, 80 percent of the time, that it is the person you love.

The lover in *Idoru* is a rock star named Rez who plans to marry the *idoru* he loves, named Rei Toei. This plan upsets a lot of people, and two of them journey to Japan: Colin Laney, who was brilliant at intuitive searches of databases until his nerves were fried by some bad guys, and Chia McKenzie, a 14-year-old member of

Rez's fan club. But this is not a book review, so forget the plot and ask the obvious question: what is Rei Toei?

She is a program residing in "something that looked like a large silver thermos bottle."

Operational *idorus* are "desiring machines."

Rez is in love with her.

Can he touch her? Certainly he can use VR to think that he can. That is not so bad. Don't we all only think that we can touch one another? When we touch, that doesn't take place in our hands but in our mind—which is also the dwelling-place of virtual reality. Is it so strange to be in love with a VR image? The fall of Troy was caused by an *idoru* named Helen, who was not physically experienced by most of the men who fought because of her. The French were led not by Joan of Arc but by their idea of Joan of Arc.

Laney, the maverick cyberspace explorer, tries to learn more about Rez by entering the databases surrounding him and intuiting his state of mind. Gibson portrays databases as palpable landscapes that can be moved through

like real terrain; his characters do not read data, but experience it. Is this impossible? There are investors who can riffle through an annual report and sense that a company is worthless.

Gibson's novel is set in Japan, which is the beta version of the twenty-first century. Already today the Japanese have rudimentary *idorus*, including "Kyoko Date," described in *Wired* as "the first computer-generated pop star." Her form, we learn, has been assembled from 40,000 polygons. I am not sure what a polygon is, but I have seen her picture, and she's a babe. She has hit records and gives video concerts. Thousands of fans are in love with her. Now James Cameron, the director who gave us the digital villain in *Terminator 2*, is preparing *Avatar*, a movie in which a dozen of the actors will be made by computers.

Gibson's novel has already supplied a name for such creatures: *synthespians*. Will they be frauds? I think they will have a separate reality from human actors, but they will appeal to our emotions in a similar way. Rei Toei is contained in programming inside a canister. Harrison Ford is contained in programming on celluloid inside a film can. Rez cannot touch Rei Toei. We cannot touch Julia Ormond or Halle Berry. He responds to her, we respond to them. Rez has at least been in the same room with Rei Toei. He's ahead on points.

Musing on the current image of virtual reality, Gibson has said, "The pretty girl in the goggles and gloves is beginning to look like those pictures of flying cars." Yes. Our best input devices are purely mental. Where is cyberspace? In its most advanced form right now, it is unfolding not on chips but in the pages of fiction. "Where are you," John Perry Barlow asks, "when you read a book?"





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It was irresistible: I'm flying into Nebraska this month, not only to surprise my mom on Mother's Day (shh!), but also to join my hometown in the annual **Lady Vestey Victorian Festival** ([www.esu9.k12.ne.us/~superior/vestey.html](http://www.esu9.k12.ne.us/~superior/vestey.html)). Lady Vestey is our proudest export: one of the first self-made American businesswomen, she married Lord Vestey, the man who gave the world Spam. And with one word the whole trip becomes Net-related...

Nebraska—home of **Communications Decency Act** sponsor Senator James Exon, retired—is the perfect place to hang out and wait for the Supreme Court to rule on the CDA's constitutionality. I can take comfort in the fact that the justices asked some well-informed (Net-savvy *and* tech-savvy!) questions and said some appropriately cutting things to the government's pro-CDA lawyers when they heard the case in March. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) notes that if the Court's hearing had been broadcast over the Net, it would've been CDA-illegal, since on the chamber ceiling there are pictures of naked children and bare-breasted women...

The Lady Vestey/Jim Exon convergence has me asking one of the Net's eternal questions: is spam free speech? The hacker community spent a few fun days recently kicking the stuffing out of **Cyber-Promotions**. These are the folks responsible for so much of the junk e-mail you may be receiving...Unfortunately, I missed the hacked version of the Cyber-Promotions front page; maybe the for-historical-purposes-only Hacked page at **2600** magazine's site

([www.2600.com/hacked\\_pages](http://www.2600.com/hacked_pages)) will locate a copy...In the meantime, we can all drop by **JunkBusters** ([www.junkbusters.com](http://www.junkbusters.com)) for the latest spam-stopping tips. I'm not *always* pro-hacker: the toads who broke into the NCAA's home page during college basketball play-offs and replaced it with racist rubbish are just jerks...

I'm not always pro-Microsoft, either, but here's something nice: **Bill Gates** ponied up a bunch of hardware for Africare, an African-American organization that works on community-development projects in Africa, to build a "Digital Village" for Soweto, South Africa. It will give schools and residents free computer access and training. Bill's planning to fund 99 more. Cool or what?...

Meanwhile, be on the lookout for the **PlayNet** entertainment network, coming soon to a bar near you. Whatever happened to pinball?...On the other hand, if you like to wander the Web where other, more frantic brains are gathered, both San Francisco and Dallas-Fort Worth airports have new pay-to-surf Internet kiosks, with more to come elsewhere. Better get some in Seattle and Washington-Dulles, too, if Microsoft really does open those offices in Virginia (near AOL?), as rumored. And don't forget Lincoln's airport, please, and soon!...

How long will the American public remember AOL's recent busy-signal bonanza? We'll see, now that they're kicking off another

membership drive, the better to see the new ads in the chat areas...If the end of the school semester has you worried about finals, drop by AOL's Research Zone (keyword: research zone) for relief, or go vent with sports reporter Adrenaline Alli (keyword: alli)...Want to gauge the depth of a generation gap? Take the test subject to the MSN **Duckman** area ([duckman.msn.com](http://duckman.msn.com)) and see whether they get hysterical or offended...I feel it's a sign of the apocalypse, Duckman sharing an online service with **Miss Manners** ([underwire.msn.com](http://underwire.msn.com))...Gonna watch the Indy 500 on TV, or would you rather catch the cybercast at [www.theautochannel.com](http://www.theautochannel.com)?...Reality TV, meet reality Web: **Cold Case** ([www.coldcase.com](http://www.coldcase.com)) lets you—yes, you—take a crack at actual unsolved homicide cases...

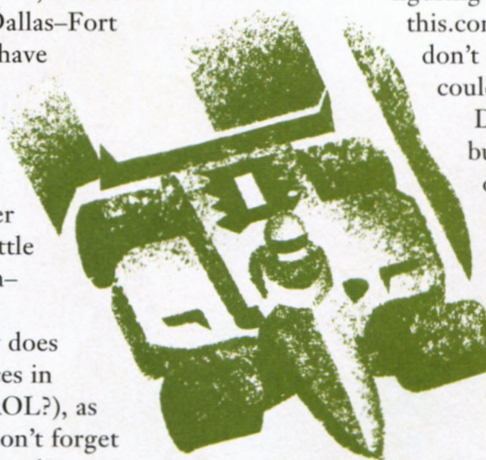
At the moment, the Net knows just where you're going when you type in the URL of your choice, but if the guys in charge of figuring out who gets this.com and that.com don't quit bickering, that could change...

Did you know that buying a car online is one of the faster-growing Web pastimes? And to ease the most painful part of the process, you can now do credit checks

online at **AutoConnect**

([www.autoconnect.net](http://www.autoconnect.net))...Now

there's a thought: I could cash in my airline ticket out of Nebraska, rent myself a nice little compact, and drive back to NYC...





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## SLACKERS & HACKERS

NATHANIEL WICE



Last winter's Nielsen reports gave the networks a big scare, as it became clear that significant numbers of people

were starting to prefer the other screen in the house: 1.2 million viewers had vanished. "If America Online were a TV program," noted one Nielsen spokesman at the time, "it would have about the same rating as episodes of 'Star Trek: Voyager.'" TV seems to have heard the message. Flick around now, and every network is trying to incorporate the Internet's edge into its programming one way or another, even to the point where Academy Awards host Billy Crystal was delivering jokes culled from the show's official Web site ([www.oscar.com](http://www.oscar.com)).

Of these attempts, so far MTV has pushed the envelope farthest with its split-screen "Yack Live"—since the late months of 1994, the network has experimented with adding the scrolling text of its hormonally amped America Online chat channels to the bottom of its music video broadcasts. On first impression the gimmick is eye-catching in the tradition of the animated station IDs that are still MTV's proudest area of innovation—all those "d00dz" and "laydeez" laying down their own alphanumeric "Beavis and Butt-head" commentary underneath the rock stars and videos. Catch the broadcast "Yack" during a longer program, such as a rerun of "My So-Called Life," though, and you may actually

be charmed by the high-tech, low-touch rap session as it works its way through group mushiness and resentment and back again before an ad break, all the while making interpretive hay of the on-screen fodder.


Most "Yack Live" sessions last at least an hour and are unannounced, usually in the East Coast after-school hours or late at night. Rick Holzman, VP of programming and promotion for MTV Interactive, who has overseen the development of MTV's AOL area (keyword: [mtv](http://mtv)) and browser-busting Web site ([mtv.com](http://mtv.com)), explains that the format is just another dab of paint on the MTV palette.

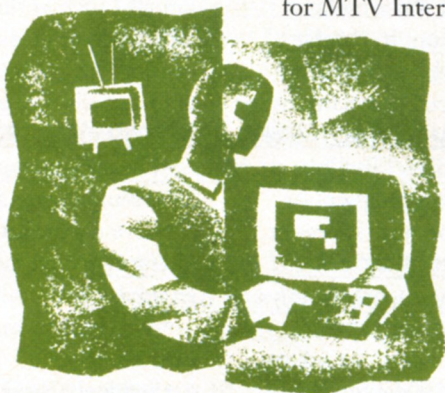
"'Yack Live' is an enabling technology, not a show," he says.

The first public sign of an upcoming "Yack Live" event is usually the appearance of MTVixen or one of MTV's other online personalities (including the less sassy MTVirgin, the studiously androgynous MTVyack, or the hackerish guy MTViolator) in one of the network's chat rooms on AOL. They'll start priming the participants for the chance to see their screen names televised. Speaking of this prep time, 'Vixen sounds like a producer from "American Bandstand," grooming hoi polloi for their on-camera fame. "I try to keep the kids informed about how they can help themselves get on TV," she says. "I tell them to talk about what's on-screen, but mostly just to be clever and creative." The don'ts are a standard run of TV censorship—no swearing, no hate speech—mixed with some basics

of good online chat etiquette: no scrolling (repeatedly typing space-return to scroll text off the screen) and no polling ("Who likes Madonna?"). "These kids are pretty quick," says 'Vixen, whose role as a host is very different from that of her on-camera counterparts (she spends a rock solid hour a day answering e-mail and still feels guilty for not getting to it all). "They figure out quickly what we want and how to get picked. We actually have kids who become our own teacher's pet, and they effectively become the hosts." (Though the executives say they have yet to officially deputize any regulars, a source of some hostility according to 'Vixen.)

Once a channel has been chosen it usually stays up for a few videos, with about one out of five comments actually getting picked by 'Vixen and the show's producers for the TV screen. At the same time, the appearance on MTV of the "Yack" chat causes the AOL rooms to engorge. Each room holds 50 people, with a new room automatically created as they fill. Allie Eberhardt, creative director for MTV Interactive, says it's typical to see thousands of kids in the chat rooms during an extended "Yack" session, as is sometimes run for special events such as Valentine's Day or an all-day screening of episodes from MTV's real-life soap opera, "The Real World." "The first time I saw the rooms explode like that," remembers Holzman, "I thought, Oh my God, people really want to participate."

It's an encouraging conclusion. Maybe the real lesson of the declining TV viewership and emerging online medium isn't simply that teenage America's favorite pastime is sitting in front of a screen, but something else instead...socializing. 







Been scammed much lately? If you're on the Internet, chances are you have been or you soon may be. Every year scams relieve our collective pockets of at least \$40 billion. A Harris survey found that scammers have approached nine out of every 10 adult Americans, while 29 percent—52 million people—responded to their come-hither spiels. Nearly 90 percent of those in a recent FOX News/Opinion Dynamics poll said they didn't feel that personal information, such as credit card numbers, is safe on the Internet.

When the National Fraud Information Center ([www.fraud.com](http://www.fraud.com)) first began probing online scams in 1992, it got a paltry 20 inquiries a day. Now the online patrol is swamped with 150 e-mails a week and 350 phone calls every day from surfers concerned they might be getting robbed.

That's why, beginning this month, Safety Net will be here to report on scams and to help scamsters see the error of their ways. From pyramid schemes to chain letter hoaxes, from credit repair ruses to business opportunity fleeces, from contrived medical claims to "free" credit cards, we will help you surf away from the con men with the modems.

Paulette Cooper is one unfortunate soul who got milked. The author of *The 100 Top Psychics in America* (Pocket Books, 1996) didn't see it coming.

"A regular in our book publishing newsgroup said he was a consultant who could help people sell their books...I was interested for my book called *277 Secrets Your Dog Wants You to Know* [Ten Speed Press, 1995].

"I sent him the \$50 he wanted," Cooper explains. "That was last

November. After tweaking him several times, he finally told me he had sent me a list of pet bookstores. I said I didn't want that because I knew they all only bought books from one publishing house. Then he said he had other information for me as well and had sent it. I never received it."

Cooper's case is typical. All the "consultant" needed was a modem and a mailing program. In regular "telemarketing fraud," says Jack Norris, chief of special prosecutions for the Florida Attorney General, "we're dealing with P.O. boxes." But "the Internet makes it even tougher" to catch the bad guys because it's easier for them to hide their identities.

Hiding his identity is what the guy who took \$400 of Adrian Vanzulli's money did. "He claimed to be selling prerelease Pentium 200 laptops by Toshiba. Well, he asked me to wire him a \$400 deposit and then he would overnight it to me. You can guess what happened next." What happened next was that the Pentium-peddling shark canceled his e-mail account and poof! He was gone.

The Saturday Night Special of this online crime is e-mail. They might be mass posts—aka spam—to newsgroups with head-swiveling lines such as: "You are about to make at least \$50,000—in less than 90 days." Or personal e-mails that assure you "I made \$41,000" using an online version of the ages-old chain letter. Why e-mail? Because it's simply so easy to use and so widely available—in fact, the Electronic Messaging Association projects the number of

e-mail users in the workplace alone to reach 83 million by the year 2000.

What evil lurks in the hearts of your e-mail? Dan Barrett knows. "Most of us will never meet the Net supercriminals that make the evening news," said the author of *Bandits on the Information Superhighway* (O'Reilly and Associates, 1996). "They overshadow the *real* risks online," such as simple, almost homey schemes sent by e-mail trying to snooker you. "There are often tipoffs" in your e-mails that you are being set up, Barrett explains. For example, they:

- Use anonymous addresses, e.g., 1234@anon.penet.fi.
- Give uncheckable references, e.g., "Before he died, Liberace himself endorsed this product."
- Ask you to e-mail them your credit card number.
- Suddenly know details about you that you did not reveal.
- Give their messages the urgency of a tornado warning by using LOTS

OF CAPITAL letters.

What will the future bring? "Old scams will die out," Barrett predicts, "but new ones will be harder to detect." That can't be good news for the Federal Trade

Commission, which has taken action against only seven Internet scams in the past year and a

half. And it sure can't be a good omen for the \$7 billion of ours we'll be spending online by 2000 because, as Watergate burglar G. Gordon Liddy observed, "Obviously crime pays, or there'd be no crime."

Send your complaints or suspected scams to [cbpappas@hiwaay.net](mailto:cbpappas@hiwaay.net).





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## inter

**L**.A., 1996. A half-dozen friends, in their respective homes throughout the Hollywood-Beverly Hills-San Fernando Valley area, sit at their desks in front of various Macs and PCs late at night. There is the familiar gurgle of modems connecting, and they are logged on to America Online, clicking their way to the chat area. Using handles only they know, they make small talk with the larger crowd that has already gathered. Soon they begin to instant-message one another, and before long they break away and form their own private party, a separate room where they swap gossip, talk about the day, and laugh about the throngs of other people out there in chatland.

If it sounds like this could be an episode of "Friends," the enormously popular NBC TV show, it's better than that. It is a real-life episode of the



Star of the hit TV series "Friends," Lisa Kudrow has been dipping in and out of chat rooms for years, but she often thinks there's a little more of her online than she would like

# Is There Yigeen-Life In Chat Rooms?

friends on "Friends": Courteney Cox (Monica), Jennifer Aniston (Rachel), David Schwimmer (Ross), Matthew Perry (Chandler), Matt LeBlanc (Joey), and, finally, Lisa Kudrow (Phoebe), are off work and online.

Though the entire gang has hung out online exactly like this, it is Kudrow who is the most Net-savvy. She was an early AOL devotee when her TV show was just a pilot. Four seasons later, the Net is filled with chat and sites about Kudrow and her ditzy alter ego, Phoebe Buffay. It is remarkable how much is out there on the Net about Kudrow, from the adoring to the bizarre; there are even sites offering sound clips of Phoebe's groan-worthy folk songs (see sidebar). And if Kudrow is popular on the Net, "Friends" is a phenomenon. There are sites—along with discussion groups and mailing lists—on almost every nuance of every character, including fan-written scripts, such as one by a

group of AOLers writing as if Quentin Tarantino had tried his hand at an episode (Pulp Friends?) in which the gang "gets medieval."

Kudrow is a native Californian who graduated from Vassar College with a B.S. degree in biology. Intending to pursue a career in medical research, she returned to Los Angeles, where actor/comedian Jon Lovitz convinced her to follow her passion for acting. In addition to her role on "Friends," Kudrow portrays Ursula, the waitress on NBC's "Mad About You." Kudrow is also making a splash on the big screen. She has a starring role in *Romy and Michele's High School Reunion*, and the early buzz suggests it could be the hit movie of the early summer.

Kudrow heads to Warner Brothers' Burbank Studios each workday to film "Friends." We met up with her in the elegant Blue Room, adjacent to the studio commissary. She wore dark-green

oval sunglasses and earth tones.

The conversations, which took place a few weeks before the Heaven's Gate mass suicides and a storm of Net-related publicity, touch on themes both timely and prescient: obsession, meeting strangers online, privacy, and the creepy stuff one can encounter online—as well as the appeal and the promise of the Net. Obviously, being a celebrity online is not most people's experience, but we thought the perspective, through Kudrow's eyes, was an honest and thought-provoking one.

**YIL:** Is it surprising to realize how large a universe online devotes such time and effort to you and "Friends"?

**KUDROW:** It is. The first thing that made me aware that "Friends" was becoming so popular, before the ratings shot up, was the conversations about our show on the Internet—an explosion of messages and talk and chat. It was unique to our show then. "Friends" would be getting a





thousand or more messages in an area, and other, higher-rated shows would have 438 messages. I realized, God, something is going on. The show was reaching people.

**YIL:** Was it a coincidence of timing, or is there something inherent about "Friends" that would encourage an online audience?

**KUDROW:** It's the Internet as a vehicle for chatting. Instead of the water cooler at work, there was a chat room on AOL where the people gathered. It became a sort of mirror of the show—a gathering of a bunch of people who hung out because of a common interest. Like the world that the people on "Friends" might inhabit, here was a hangout where you could go every night, sort of a neighborhood bar. Like the "Cheers" bar, or on "Friends," when we hang out at a coffee house or go over to Monica's and Rachel's. It's where you know all your friends will be. You study, and when you're done you head there. That's what the chat rooms are like.

**YIL:** Did you enjoy them?

**KUDROW:** Too much, which is why I stopped. Nothing is wrong in moderation, but I was spending too much time. I got addicted. My husband got put off and jealous. He would come over and say something and I'd say, "You've got to be quiet because I have to concentrate. This stuff is happening fast." So I stopped.

**YIL:** Because it got in the way of your relationships?

**KUDROW:** Not so much that, but because I was just too involved. Also, you realize—or at least I did—that you really have no idea who these online friends really are. You don't even know their gender. It's a fantasy that you're intimate with them.

**YIL:** So aside from chats, have you stopped going online?

**KUDROW:** Yes. There was too much bad stuff floating around about me. There's good stuff, too, but if you take it seriously you also have to take seriously the bad stuff. My brain cannot filter out the bad.

**YIL:** Are you referring to the amateur sites, the discussion groups?

**KUDROW:** Yes. I read awful, insulting things about me. There are disgusting pictures, too. There is a lot of mean stuff.

**YIL:** But there's the worshipful stuff, too.

**KUDROW:** Yes, but some of that troubles me, too. What use is there indulging in it? Frankly, it gets boring to sit there and read about yourself.

**YIL:** You say you got addicted to chat. What about it addicted you?

**KUDROW:** I'm not sure. The ability to talk anonymously with so many people.

**YIL:** Did you share the obsession with other "Friends" cast members?

**KUDROW:** We all were into it to varying degrees at one point. Now none of us



Michele and Romy (Kudrow and Mira Sorvino) dress down for a reunion.

are. We all got burned out and felt our privacy was invaded. People we don't know were e-mailing us. It's too intimate. It's way too intimate.

**YIL:** But isn't that a choice? You can use pseudonyms and retain your privacy.

**KUDROW:** Yes, but at one point, someone who knew me convinced me to let on who I was to someone else. Soon it was everywhere.

**YIL:** You could have chosen a different handle.

**KUDROW:** Yes, but when you realize that people out there could just as easily be disingenuous as real, why bother? It stuns me that there are people who leave their family because they fall in love on the

Internet. I don't understand it.

**YIL:** You can't understand how an intimate conversation could lead to a genuine relationship?

**KUDROW:** I know it happens, but the problem is that you have no idea who someone is until you become intimately involved. You cannot really know someone from chat and e-mail. I can see how it might be possible to meet someone online and then follow up with a meeting, but I'd use other ways to meet people. It's just rife with problems. Online conversations are fantasies. You are imagining the person, connecting the dots yourself. On the show, in one episode, Chandler falls in love with someone on the Net. It turns out to be Janice, who he had been dating, but was always breaking up with. But in his mind, she was some goddess. People get into trouble when their fantasies bleed into reality. Suddenly you are meeting someone you don't really know.

**YIL:** Did you ever do that?

**KUDROW:** No. But I know that people have. There's a lot of clever chatter. There are people who are good writers, with great senses of humor. I responded to that. Then people found out who I was and it became pretty creepy. It felt scary because I didn't know who these people on the other end were.

**YIL:** Being famous, of course, puts a different slant on that. What about hanging out with others like yourself? Did you and the other cast members ever go online at the same time and make contact?

**KUDROW:** Yes, sometimes we'd go to a chat room together and instant-message each other. Without knowing that we were there, lurking, people would start talking about what happened last night on the show. We'd go, like, "Oh my God, can you believe they're talking about us?" Sometimes they'd be talking about how disgusting we were. That's where the bad stuff came. For us, it was, "Yikes," and then we'd get out. It was too uncomfortable.

## "SMELLY CAT" AND OTHER HITS

Phoebe's folk songs are online, for better or for worse. Here is a sampler, from **Phoebe's Greatest Hits**:

### Love

"Love is sweet as summer showers,  
Love is a wondrous work of art.  
But your love, your love, your love,  
Is like a giant pigeon  
Crapping on my heart.  
La la la la la...."

### Smelly Cat

"Smelly cat, smelly cat  
What are they feeding you?  
Smelly cat, sme-elly cat  
It's not your fault."

### The Blackout Song

"New York City has no power,  
And the milk is getting sour,  
But to me it is not scary,  
'Cause I stay away from dairy."



**YIL:** Did you consider letting people know you were there?

**KUDROW:** That's another reason I stopped going in. I don't think it was fair. I don't think many of them would have made those comments to our faces. It made me feel bad because they thought they were safe.

**YIL:** What do you think of the Lisa Kudrow sites?

**KUDROW:** They're unnerving, to tell you the truth—that someone would devote so much time to create what's almost an altar. Obsessions. There's a commercial for a computer or something in which a girl goes on about how much she loves frogs. In her room are a bunch of froggy things, and online she's created these really elaborate Web sites and message boards about frogs. They're celebrating this as a good thing—using it to sell computers—but it's about frogs. Frogs! She's not OK! She's really not OK. Obsessions are very strange. A person finds pictures of me that no one else has and it's this big thing. Some of what you see makes you wonder who is out there. Another thing is that you can't rely on some of the conversation out there because some of what is written is intentionally written to incite. Someone writes, "I think 'Friends' sucks," just to get a reaction. And he gets a barrage: "Well, *you* suck." So it's not a genuine opinion. The truth is, if you really disliked "Friends" or any other show, you wouldn't participate in conversations about it. You wouldn't be there.

**YIL:** Perhaps the type of people who follow your career online will change now that you are appearing in movies.

**KUDROW:** I don't know how those things work.

**YIL:** How have you chosen the films that you've acted in?

**KUDROW:** You go for things that you have some connection with. With *Romy and Michele*, it was my part. I was in the play that the movie is based on, *Ladies Room*, in one of two minor roles. Some Touchtone Pictures people saw the play and decided that our parts should be turned into a movie.

**YIL:** With you as one of the stars?

**KUDROW:** Definitely not. They weren't interested in me or the girl who played it with me, Kristie Meller, a really funny actress. No one knew who we were. Then "Friends" took off after our first season and they began to consider me for the part of Michele. Unfortunately, because they still didn't think that people would go see someone they didn't know, Kristie isn't in it. For me, all's well that ends well. Mira Sorvino, who plays Romy, is a great actress. It's exciting that she did it.

**YIL:** How similar is the character to Phoebe?

**KUDROW:** She's out of it, like Phoebe, but she's a complete idiot. Phoebe's out of it in a different way—she's just sort of otherworldly. Michele, on the other hand, is just a dumb ass.

**YIL:** Do you mind being cast in roles as ditzes and airheads?

**KUDROW:** I might if they weren't very funny and very different.

**YIL:** Are you anything like Phoebe?

**KUDROW:** I have brought myself into the TV part, to a degree. I notice that there's a lot more of me in Phoebe now, for better or worse.

**YIL:** What do you and Phoebe share?

**KUDROW:** Some mannerisms, tone, cadence. It all gets thrown in. My sense of humor. There is a symbiosis between sitcom actors and writers. They see you do stuff, because you're around them a lot, and they start writing with you in mind.

**YIL:** So the producers of "Friends" saw you as Phoebe?

**KUDROW:** In superficial ways, though I don't think I'm that much like her beyond that. It's why I never thought that I was as right for the part—as right as everybody else in the room with me who were auditioning. They just looked more like her to me. They could have been Phoebe, with flower tattoos, genuinely into crystals and all that stuff.

**YIL:** And you're not?

**KUDROW:** Definitely not. So I thought it was obvious that I wasn't right for this part.

**YIL:** Yet you got the role. Any idea why?

**KUDROW:** I coped with the audition process better.

**YIL:** Are any of the things that she's famous for things that you share? Her politics, her vegetarianism?

**KUDROW:** No. I'm a committed meat-eater, for one thing.

*continued on page 103*

## 'Friends' Online



COURTESY OF NBC

There may be more Web pages devoted to "Friends" than any other television show, save the many incarnations of *Star Trek*. Here are our some of our favorites:

### Central Perk

[www.centralperk.com](http://www.centralperk.com)

VR, a scripts archive, and (at times) scintillating chat.

### La Hollywood Presents

#### "Friends"

[www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Set/7032/friends.html](http://www.geocities.com/Hollywood/Set/7032/friends.html)

Cast profiles, pictures, quotes, and a trivia contest....

### Arthur's "Friends" Page

[www.wco.com/~alin/frquotes.htm](http://www.wco.com/~alin/frquotes.htm)

Each week: new video captures and Arthur's favorite quotes.

### Links for "Friends" Friends

[www.cs.caltech.edu/~adam/LOCAL/friends.html](http://www.cs.caltech.edu/~adam/LOCAL/friends.html)

Links to more "Friends" pages and a long list of "Friends" fans.

### Sherri Slotman's "Friends" Page

[www-personal.umich.edu/~geena/friends.html](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~geena/friends.html)

Another Central Perk, after the hip café on the show, includes Phoebe's songbook, pix, and the autographs of all the stars.

### The One by People with Too Much Time on Their Hands

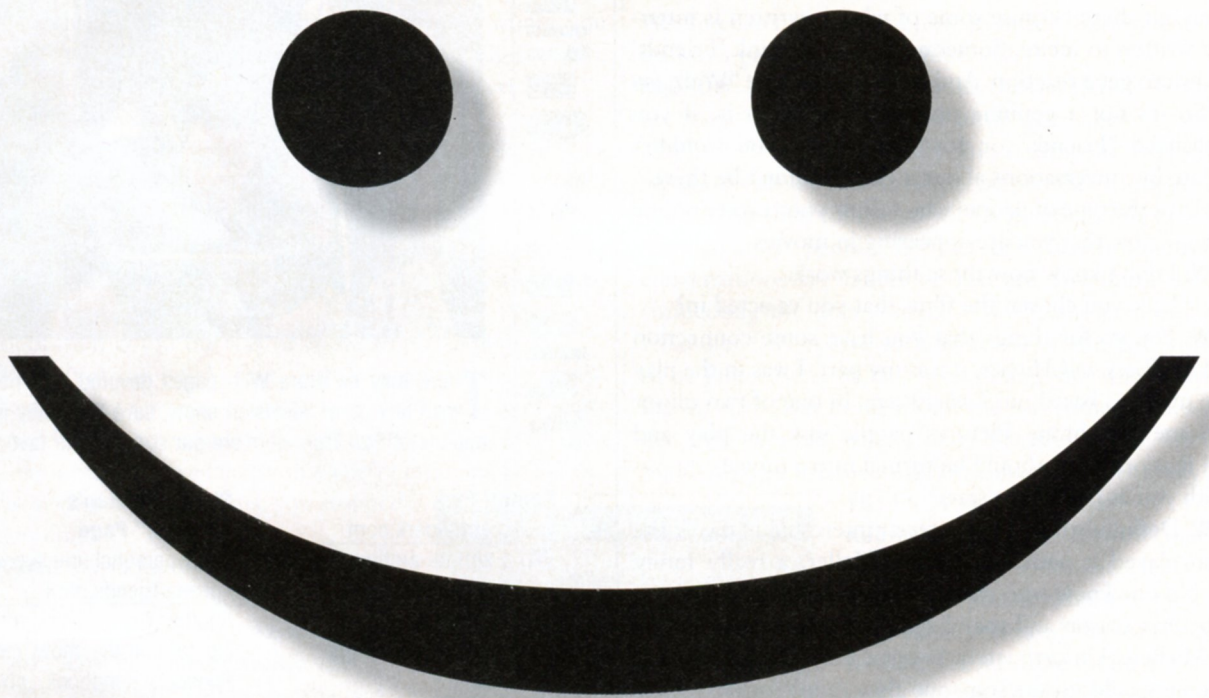
[inp.cie.rpi.edu/cgi-bin/friends](http://inp.cie.rpi.edu/cgi-bin/friends)

They "did not a) build a fan page, b) claim to build a fan page, or c) claim to answer any questions.... We built a page that is supposed to make you question why you want to interact with six fictional characters. Needless to say, we are not affiliated with NBC...any of the six characters, the monkey, or anything else vaguely associated with the show in any legitimate manner."



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# The Best Chat



# On The Net

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BY DINA GAN



Just as there are always two kinds of people in the real world, so are there two kinds of people online: those who chat, and those who don't. And those who don't just don't know what they are missing. Real-time (live) chat is where the Internet comes closest to living up to its promise as a true meeting of minds. Naturally, sex is on a lot of people's minds, but there is much more out there than that. For celebrities—actors, authors, athletes, and politicians—the Internet chat forum is becoming a required stop on the publicity tour and affords regular folks the opportunity to ask questions that would never occur to Jay Leno. For those with specific interests—parenting, entrepreneurship, newswatching—chat is also a way to share experiences, thoughts, and information in a raw, spontaneous fashion, without the geographic limitations or emotional inhibitions of a physical conversation. It's like one big conference call minus the long-distance charges.

The problem with chat is that good ones are hard to find. You could surf the Net for hours and encounter nothing but panting gutterspeak ("Anyone lookin' for some hot chat?") or worse, teenage small talk ("Hi. I'm bored. Anyone want to chat?"). In some circles, to enter a chat room and type "Anyone want to chat?" is so offensively redundant that it

guarantees no one worthwhile will actually chat with you.

So, how to separate the good chat from the weak? First, a good chat requires a certain number of people; good conversation can occur with as few as half a dozen, but any more than 30 and it's chaos. Good chat, however, doesn't depend on numbers alone. In our quest for intelligent conversation

### It's real-time

online, we thought about what our ideal chat might be:

True chat happens instantaneously. The so-called online "conferences" (The WELL) and "refreshed chats" (The Globe, The Park, The Web Broadcasting System) can be great, but did not make our cut. Conferences are just well-organized bulletin boards and refreshed chats (you hit "reload" to view new dialogue) are no more than fast-moving electronic bulletin boards. To express an enlightening thought under the breakneck pressures of real-time chat may be a greater test of intelligence than to compose an extended

### It's easy

message that gets minutes, if not hours, of polishing.

Ideally, getting on an online chat line should be as easy as walking into a room full of people. Chat software is a necessary download, but the time spent doing so should be minimal and the learning curve high. The chat should not rely heavily on emoticons or esoteric language. (That's why the pioneering

Let's talk about talk. Online chat is "insipid, stupid, base, and boring." It is also "inspired, brilliant, high-minded, and fascinating." So why is it any different from the real kind? Because online you can talk about whatever you want, whenever you want

## Friendliest Chat Rooms Online

If you just want to shoot the breeze about nothing in particular, here are a few friendly places to make you feel at home. Feel free to stop by and just say "hi." If you are a total klutz with software, you might want to start with a few of the most populated "refreshed chat" options on the Net. All you will need is your Web browser, and if you have never done chat, you are sure to get a kick out of watching your comments appear as soon as you press "submit."

Real-time Chat	Refreshed Chat
<b>AOL People Connection</b> keyword: people connection	<b>The Globe</b> www.theglobe.com
<b>Yahoo! Chat</b> chat.yahoo.com	<b>The Park</b> www.the-park.com
<b>MSN ChatWorld</b> communicate.msn.com	<b>Talk City</b> www.talkcity.com
<b>Firebird's Forest</b> www.users.dircon.co.uk/~crane/firebird/index.html	<b>Web Broadcasting System</b> wbs.net

### It's pretty

but daunting Internet Relay Chat isn't rated.)

The interface should be nice to look at and easy to read, while not obscuring the point of chat—conversation. Text-based chat is still the most widely available, but the genre is expanding into multimedia, and all kinds of avatars and user-defined icons are now barging their way into the conversation. Mark Jeffrey, cofounder of The Palace, predicts that "by the end of 1997, multimedia chat will be the dominant form of Internet communication. Once people get an eyeful of this stuff, they never want to go back to just text." But Yahoo!'s chat producer, Doug Hirsch, thinks avatars are "almost a waste of bandwidth."

### It's smart

The conversation should stick to the subject. Regulars should know what they are talking about. Moderators should be present to extinguish flammers—and if they are not, people should know enough to treat others with respect.

### It's free

Aside from Internet access charges or commercial online service fees, you shouldn't have to pay a fee for the privilege of chatting.

With these criteria in mind, we braved endless hours of prattle, blabber, and confabulation and came up with 25 real-time chats that are worth getting in on.



# top 25

## ONLINE CHATS

### BROWSER CHAT

#### MSNBC CHAT

##### NEWS JUNKIES

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** [www.msnbc.com/news/26875.asp](http://www.msnbc.com/news/26875.asp)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** minimal (Java-based IRC or ActiveX)

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** NewsChat, weekdays 3–7 p.m. EST; weekends 5–7 p.m.; MSNBC/CNBC Chat Hour, weekdays 7–8 p.m.

**MODERATED BY:** various MSNBC online hosts (a host will greet you as you enter the room)

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** the well-informed, or at least highly opinionated, newswatcher

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** The daily NewsChat is less than a year old, but it draws a consistent crowd of about 30 to 50. Conversation is always topical and intelligent. Here is one chat room where one need not be ashamed to use words like "tautological" and "sycophant." Subjects change swiftly; in the span of one 20-minute conversation, the chat covered cloning ("Speaking of cloning, would it be possible to clone someone as boring as Al Gore?"), weapons debate ("You can buy a MIG-15 for about as much as a Ford Taurus"), and JonBenet Ramsey ("In all likelihood, JonBenet was taken to the basement for an 'attitude adjustment.' From there things went

horribly awry"). Special guests might range from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was a guest in December 1996, to the kids who discovered the Internet Explorer bug in March.

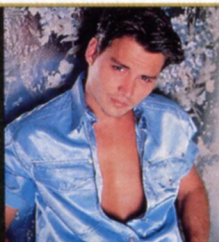
#### YAHOO! CHAT

##### THE TALK ENGINE

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** [chat.yahoo.com](http://chat.yahoo.com)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** minimal (requires download of iChat software as a plug-in)

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** late afternoon and evening



**Johnny Depp**  
AMERICA ONLINE  
November 17, 1995

**Depp:** I like my job, but some of the things that go along with it can be difficult. But actually, I've found anonymity in America Online.

**MODERATED BY:** usually no one

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** anyone who has Yahoo!'s search engine bookmarked

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** If you're looking for a stable, real-time Web-based chat system, Yahoo! is hard to beat. Since its inception on January 7, 1997, the Yahoo! Chat rooms have had plenty of visitors; "well into the six figures," according to Doug Hirsch. The popularity of the Yahoo! search engine pretty much insures a decent crowd in the chat rooms—as many as 4,000 people are logged on at any given

time. Each chat room has a limit of 21 people, and when one fills, another one opens up on the same topic. And you don't have to stop surfing while you chat. A separate frame allows you to pull up URLs, and you can embed URLs into your text that others can double-click to open. Users also can create private rooms, and entire families can arrange to meet on Yahoo! Chat. Says Hirsch, "It's a lot cheaper than long-distance calling." (Editor's Note: Yahoo! and Yahoo! Internet Life are business partners.)

#### TALK.COM

##### COOL GEEKS

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** [talk.com/talk](http://talk.com/talk)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** medium (requires HotWired's Java-based chat software)

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** 9 p.m. EST (6 p.m. PST)

**MODERATED BY:** HotWired hosts

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** the digital culturally literate

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** HotWired has perfected the art of pushing cool geeks' buttons, and Talk.com is another handful of magic fingers. Six forums (Head Space, Pop Talk, Electronic Frontiers, etc.) host moderated chats on everything from the arts to digital activism to science fiction. Past guests include Allen Ginsberg, Mary Gaitskill, and Diamanda Galás. The Gillian Anderson chat was combined with live audio, attracted hundreds of people, "and for weeks afterward," says Talk.com producer Ian Raikow, "tens of thousands of people logged on to the archived audio file."

#### PATHFINDER CHAT

##### POP CULTURE

**WHERE TO FIND IT:**

[pathfinder.com/chat](http://pathfinder.com/chat)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** minimal (iChat recommended; pre-registration required)

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** scheduled events

**MODERATED BY:** various Pathfinder affiliates

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** those who crave a well-balanced chat diet

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** Pathfinder is a hub for mainstream news and information, so the conversation often will attract the responsibly intelligent. This offers celebrity events hosted by *People*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Money*, *Time*, and a variety of regular topic rooms, such as Café, AllPolitics, ParentTime, and even ProgressiveFarmer. According to Pathfinder Communications producer Molly Ker, "The celebrity chats always outperform the regular topical chat." *Sports Illustrated's* chat with model Tyra Banks was very popular; Kareem Abdul Jabbar was less so. But a smaller crowd means you are more likely to get your questions answered. I asked Kareem, "Do you chat online in your spare time?" He immediately replied, "No."



**Wynonna Judd**  
PRODIGY SPOTLIGHT  
February 20, 1997

**AJuddfan:** The Wynonna fan message board has been a great place for Judd fans to meet. Will you post a message there for us occasionally?

**Wynonna:** I must admit to you that I am a computer school dropout. I'm a one-on-one communicator... the human one-on-one experience means more to me than using a computer.

### 50 BY TOPIC

#### AFRICAN AMERICAN

**NetNoir**  
AOL keyword: NetNoir  
Black is beautiful.

#### BOOKS

**SimonSays**  
[www.simonsays.com/chat](http://www.simonsays.com/chat)  
Simon and Schuster talk.

#### #Bookbam

[www.cyberstation.net/~cursor/bookbam.html](http://www.cyberstation.net/~cursor/bookbam.html)  
The IRC bookworm channel.

#### BRAINFOOD

**Weissbach**  
[www.weissbach.com](http://www.weissbach.com)  
Chat with the radio host.

#### Art Bell Nightly Chat

[www.artbell.com](http://www.artbell.com)  
A Java-based chat with cult man Art Bell.

#### OMNI Magazine

[www.omnimag.com](http://www.omnimag.com)  
What inquiring minds want to know.

#### BUSINESS

**Entrepreneur Magazine**  
[www.entrepreneurmag.com/convention.htm](http://www.entrepreneurmag.com/convention.htm)  
Small-business central.

#### Intel Boardwalk

[www.boardwalk.intel.com](http://www.boardwalk.intel.com)  
Talk with industry leaders.

#### COLLEGE

**The Campus**  
[www.thecampus.com](http://www.thecampus.com)  
A virtual university row hosted by DJs from The Buzz (New York, 105.9 FM). They take requests, but they probably won't play them.





**Kathy Ireland**  
**PRODIGY SPOTLIGHT**  
March 11, 1997

**Dalvtempest:** Do you know much about computers?

**Ireland:** No, I don't. One of the things that's fascinating with the Web page is the opportunity to learn. Previously, my only computer experience was the cash machine at the bank.

## ECHO LIVE

### EAST COAST SMARTIES

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** [www.echonyc.com/f2f/chat/chat.html](http://www.echonyc.com/f2f/chat/chat.html)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** Mild (dial 212-292-0910 via modem or telnet to echonyc.com)

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** monthly (see the schedule, posted at [www.echonyc.com/f2f/events.html](http://www.echonyc.com/f2f/events.html))

**MODERATED BY:** Echo hosts

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** cultural tourists in a New York state of mind  
**WHY IT'S A BEST:** Unlike most celebrity chats, Echo Live doesn't relegate the hoi polloi to a separate chat room. Says Echo founder Stacy Horn, "Anyone can just shout out a question, but if it gets out of hand, we'll say, 'Hey, stop that!'" Not that things ever get out of hand. Echo Live attracts a sophisticated audience, as many as 100 chatters per event. The guests lean toward the esoteric (writer Fran Lebowitz, *Village Voice* columnist Cynthia Heimel, mayoral candidate Fernando Ferrer), but

if you consider highbrow conversation an evening well spent, this is definitely the place. Also check out Echo's alt.film chats, which debuted in March with actor/director Adrienne Shelly, star of a couple of Hal Hartley movies.

## SONICNET

### TUNE TALK

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** [www.sonicnet.com/soniccore/chat/](http://www.sonicnet.com/soniccore/chat/)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** minimal (uses a Java applet)

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** late afternoon, early evening (EST)

**MODERATED BY:** the SonicNet crew

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** fans of techno, hip-hop, and alternapop

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** Ever read an interview with a rock star and wonder what was cut? Chat in one of three lounges or log on for a scheduled event with bands your mother has never heard of. SonicNet's greatest hits include AC/DC, Laurie Anderson, and the Butthole Surfers. But the usual scores include up-and-coming alternative and hip-hop bands. The more "inventive insults and embarrassing revelations," the better. This is where musicians will confess drug use, belief in God, or a predilection for not wearing underwear.

## ESPNET SPORTSZONE

### PLAY BY PLAY

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** [espnet.sportszone.com/editors/talk/chatter.html](http://espnet.sportszone.com/editors/talk/chatter.html)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** mild (requires pre-registration)

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** mid to late afternoon (EST)

**MODERATED BY:** the hosts of SportsZone

## What Makes Good Chat?

"Our first obligation is to give our users a building that stays in one place. My measure of success with most chats is when you go there, are there actually people there? If you go into a chat room and no one's in there, it's a failure."

—DOUG HIRSCH, producer of Yahoo! Communities

"Good chat is good peoples. [And that is goodest English!] The content of a site can set a mood, but ultimately you're there for who else is there."

—MARK JEFFREY, cofounder of The Palace

"The most important element is, first, that there has to be enough people in the room. About 10 people is good enough. A popular chat can be either celebrity/guest-oriented or thematic. For a thematic chat, the moderator needs to be entertaining and must keep the conversation going so that it doesn't dissolve into pandemonium."

—SEAN MALATESTA, chairman and co-senior executive of YACK! The Ultimate Guide to Internet Chat

"Persistent identity is another key to successful chats. That is, even if the people in the chat are anonymous, if they come back day after day to the same group, with the same name, they begin to invest in their reputation and in the relationships they are forming in the chat room. In my opinion, this is the single most important thing."

—LINDA STONE, director of Virtual Worlds group, Microsoft Research

"There are a number of factors that make a chat good...such as popularity of guest...the bigger the star, the more interest from members; interesting questions that provoke thoughtful answers from our guest and make for a robust transcript; our wonderful moderators who provide our members with valuable information about our guest and what they are promoting; the willingness of our guests to embrace this new medium and to have fun with it!"

—RANDI GELFAND, Spotlight executive producer/Prodigy talent director

"We're aiming to provide something more than just a place where people type in 'M/F?,' but we're also aware that sometimes that's all people want."

—IAN RAIKOW, producer of Talk.com

"The multimedia devices used during conferences [audio and visual streaming] is a definite attraction."

—THERESA HUNTER OWEN, CompuServe's public relations coordinator

"Successful events are evaluated in two ways: numbers and quality. High-quality programming comes from several things: easy-to-use, simple, and clean interface. Great programming people who book and create programming opportunities. Well-trained moderators (sometimes guest and moderator are the same person). Well-informed guests [who] understand the medium and what they are about to do. Knowledgeable and informed attendees."

—AMY ARNOLD, manager of AOL Live

### Our Square

[www.oursquare.com](http://www.oursquare.com)  
Ivy Leaguers (only) contact forum. Quiet.

### FOOD

#### Food Channel

[www.foodchannel.com](http://www.foodchannel.com)  
Mouth-watering images.

### Smart Wine

[www.smartwine.com/chat/](http://www.smartwine.com/chat/)  
Get drunk on intelligent discussion.

### Tea

[www.harney.com](http://www.harney.com)  
Care for some stimulating conversation?

### GAMES

#### NEXT Generation

[www.next-generation.com](http://www.next-generation.com)  
Whatever you do, don't sign on as a female.

#### DreamFusion

[www.dreamfusion.com](http://www.dreamfusion.com)  
Where Palace wizards play.

### Arcadium

[www.arcadium.com](http://www.arcadium.com)  
Popular with teens from around the world. Open chats are mostly of the "Where are u from?" variety.

#### Marathon Palace

[www.mediablitz.com/palace](http://www.mediablitz.com/palace)

Hook up with a game partner. Make sure your avatar looks impressive.

#### BingoZone Lounge

[www.bingozone.com](http://www.bingozone.com)  
Chat while you're waiting for a game to start.



## Chat Interfaces: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

**IRC** Basic text-based chat that some say has more protocol than a medieval kingdom. You must memorize various commands to do something as simple as view a list of people in a channel, and it is so decentralized, it can be impossible to find the channel you want. For example, #Twilight\_Zone has nothing to do with the TV show.

**PROS:** It's democratic, fast, freewheeling, and open to everyone.

**CONS:** Old-fashioned.

**iChat** IRC with a pretty face. Type in your comments and watch them appear on the main window. Other windows allow you to express "emotions" and embed clickable URLs into your text.

**PROS:** The software is free.

**CONS:** The software isn't quite trouble-free.

**Java-based** Text-based chat script that's usually site-specific. Pretty bare-bones. Type in text and it appears in a scrolling chat window.

**PROS:** You need no other software besides a browser with Java.

**CONS:** Don't try it with a modem slower than 28.8Kbps.

**AOL** Easy and attractive text-based chat. Type in a comment and it appears instantly in the chat window. Special features allow you to highlight, ignore, or "instant message" other users.

**PROS:** Chat happens with lightning speed.

**CONS:** In a crowded room, you practically have to be a speed-reader.

**Prodigy** As of June, Prodigy users will be able to view photos during chat and, during celeb chats, talk to other members in rows.

**PROS:** Prodigy works to protect chat guests from unruly conversation.

**CONS:** Users may leave a celeb chat feeling like they didn't connect with anyone.

**CompuServe** Designed to emulate a CB radio, chatters here can choose from a number of different "channels" and type comments onto a rather plain-looking, but highly efficient, text log.

**PROS:** It's purely text-based.

**CONS:** It's purely text-based. And, some have reported, not a great place to be if you are female.

**MSN** Two flavors to choose from: bare-bones textual chat and Comic Chat, where you can view the conversation as a character in a black-and-white comic strip. Your text appears as a word balloon popping out of your character's mouth.

**PROS:** Comic Chat is a fun feature that can add a novel dimension to your chat experience. When you get tired of it, go back to text chat.

**CONS:** Space within the text balloons is limited; the characters are not always unique, so unless you know how to change yours, things can get confusing. Plus, Mac users are left out of the loop.

**Palace:** Graphical chat in which users can move about in a colorful virtual world under the guise of an avatar. To chat, type what you want to say and it appears in a balloon emanating from your avatar's "mouth." A special feature enables you to "whisper" a comment so that only one other user will be able to read it. You'll need to register the software to enable all the features.

**PROS:** Threads of conversation are easy to separate by simply placing your avatar near the ones whose words you're interested in hearing.

**CONS:** In a crowded room, it can be hard to keep track of the speech balloons. You also can view conversation as a chat log in a separate window, but this seems to defeat the purpose.

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** sports fans who know their stats

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** Its affiliation with the cable sports channel ESPN guarantees great guests and a loyal following. Regular chat rooms for baseball, football, soccer, and other spectator sports are available at any time. Scheduled programs offer you the opportunity to talk with ESPN on-air personalities, analysts, and experts. Players, coaches, and writers occasionally drop by. Every Thursday, you can settle those bets with a sports trivia expert.

### PALACE

#### THE PALACE MANSION

#### SMILEY CENTRALE

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** [www.thepalace.com](http://www.thepalace.com)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** Palace software

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** any time

**MODERATED BY:** "wizards" (Mansion regulars who are invited to moderate)

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** Palace virgins

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** The Mansion is the hub of all Palace server activity and by far the most populous. Newbies and wizards alike gather here by the hundreds to get an eyeful or show off their skill with the software. Different rooms yield vastly different experiences. At The Beach, for example, you will find that all of your text is transformed into "dudespeak" until you type in the words "surf's down." You're likely to run into folks in the Net industry, including the cofounder of the Palace himself, Mark Jeffrey.

#### MINDS PALACE

#### LA LA LAND

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** [www.minds.com/palace](http://www.minds.com/palace)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** Requires Palace software and registration

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** every day (except Mondays), 8 p.m. EST (5 p.m. PST)

**MODERATED BY:** cyberentomologists, software developers, and left-coast purveyors of cool

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** Palace virgins who got lost in the Mansion

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** Another high concept from Electric Minds, Howard Rheingold's virtual Discovery Zone for grown-ups. Talk tech on Tuesdays, chat with a visionary on Wednesdays, get mixed up in a "20-something rumble" on Thursdays. If you're a newbie to the software, try Friday's Random Access. With any luck, you will meet a wizard who will take you away to his Astronomy Room.

#### DECIPHER'S STAR WARS CCG PALACE

#### SCI-FI SOCIAL

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** [www.decipher.com/starwars/index.html](http://www.decipher.com/starwars/index.html)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** Palace software

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** weekday evenings after 8 p.m. and weekends starting from late afternoon

**MODERATED BY:** decipher hosts and volunteers

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** Star Wars fans and Star Wars CCG players

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** The Star Wars customizable card game is second in popularity to "Magic: The Gathering," but you don't have to play the game to enjoy this chat. Since its launch in late February, this site seen as many as 140 users at a time—the rerelease of the Star Wars flicks played a part. Typically, you will find 20 or 30



#### Jesus Lizard

SONICNET

September 13, 1996

**Jenn:** What do you think of chatting on the Internet, interacting with fans?

**JesusLizard:** This is a little strange, but I like it. We have done this once before, last summer, but it was a failure. No one showed up and everything they said was stupid. It was like being at your first drunk party.



chatters trading comments as well as cards ("I have all the main characters besides the Droids"). Carol Wisely, creative producer of the site, says they've gotten green lights to use Lucasfilm's imagery and music.

## COMPU SERVE

### CONFERENCE CENTER

#### BIZ WHIZZES

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** CompuServe (go: conference)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** none

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** weeknights, 7-10 p.m.

**MODERATED BY:** CompuServe sysops

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** business and finance types

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** CompuServe is the C-SPAN of commercial online services. Case in point: the chat with Al Gore had more attendees than the Mick Jagger conference. CompuServe does well with mainstream celebs such as Cindy Crawford, but its live chats on business, finance, and the computer industry are simply unrivaled, if only for the large numbers of dedicated users who signed on to it as an information tool and never left. More evidence of practicality: when not hosting guests, the Conference Center is used for live customer service.

## PRODIGY

### PRODIGY'S SPOTLIGHT

#### SHOWTIME AND TELL

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** spotlight.

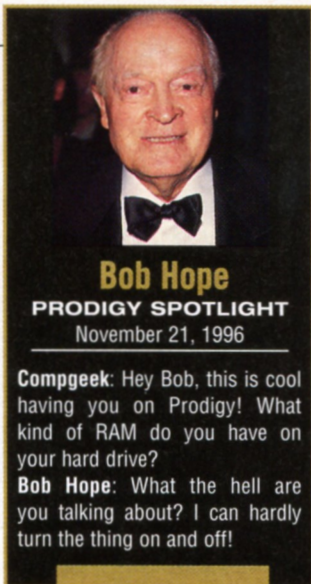
prodigy.com

**HASSLE FACTOR:** none (requires Prodigy subscription)

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** weeknights, 9-11 p.m. EST

**MODERATED BY:** Prodigy entertainment producers

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** fans of high-



**Bob Hope**

#### PRODIGY SPOTLIGHT

November 21, 1996

**Compgeek:** Hey Bob, this is cool having you on Prodigy! What kind of RAM do you have on your hard drive?

**Bob Hope:** What the hell are you talking about? I can hardly turn the thing on and off!

profile authors, actors, and athletes

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** Two producers are assigned to each chat—one works with the celebrity, one engages the audience by sending out pictures and info. Once Prodigy chats move to the Net, they will have the potential for as many as 50 million attendees. Popular guests have included Roseanne, Spike Lee, Richard Simmons, and Wall Street guru Peter Lynch.

### SUZI ON SEX

#### SMART SEX

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** suzionsex.

prodigy.com

**HASSLE FACTOR:** none (requires Prodigy subscription)

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** Wednesdays, 11 p.m.-1 a.m. EST

**MODERATED BY:** Suzi Landolphi

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** anyone with a sex or relationship concern

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** There is such a thing as intelligent sex chat online. Relationship expert Suzi Landolphi (seen her on "Donahue"?) conducts this necessarily frank talk with a decidedly "safe sex" slant (she's also a partner in Condomania). A user might reveal that he and his girlfriend just

## Tracking Chat with YACK!

To keep up with the steady stream of new chat offerings, there's only one place to go: YACK! The Ultimate Guide to Internet Chat ([www.yack.com](http://www.yack.com)). Other sites, such as Yahoo! Net Events and NetGuide Live, will keep up-to-date on live events happening on the Web, but only YACK! focuses solely on chat. The site was developed by *Inter@ctive Week* freelancer Farhan Memom, who was the creator and editor-in-chief of Prodigy's cyberzine, *Living Digital*. With the help of a programmer, a graphic designer, and a business developer, he designed YACK! as a resource for people looking for good, topical Internet chat. A feature called "What's Yackcellent" is a list of the day's best chats as determined by the user interface, the presence of a moderator, the quantity of the chatters, and the quality of the conversation. The site, which went live in January, doesn't just provide a daily schedule of chats, but also lists the software you'll need, links to editorial content, and an e-mail reminder service so you'll never miss a chat you're interested in.

had their first experience with mutual masturbation, and Suzi might exclaim, "I'm so proud of you! That should be mandatory homework for everyone!" Think of this as an online version of the MTV show, "Love Lines."

## MICROSOFT NETWORK

### MSN's COMPUTING FORUM

#### TECH TALK

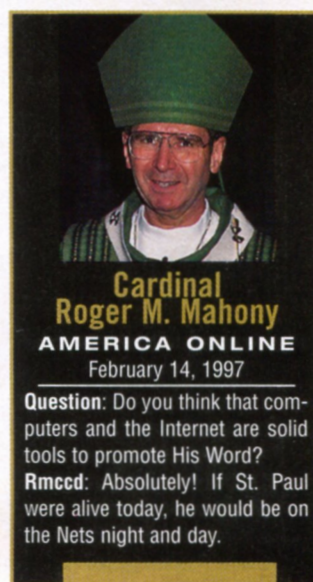
**WHERE TO FIND IT:** communicate.msn.com

**HASSLE FACTOR:** none (requires MSN subscription)

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** daily, 5-7 p.m. EST  
**MODERATED BY:** Computing Forum hosts

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** the PC-compatible

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** Computing is one of the more popular forums on MSN, and the frequently scheduled chats here are directed at techies and newbies alike. A unique feature of MSN chats is Comic Chat: you get to view the conversation as a member of a cartoon universe. Talk shop on shareware, Internet programming, multimedia, and portable computers.



**Cardinal Roger M. Mahony**

#### AMERICA ONLINE

February 14, 1997

**Question:** Do you think that computers and the Internet are solid tools to promote His Word?

**Rmccd:** Absolutely! If St. Paul were alive today, he would be on the Nets night and day.

### RIFFF

#### WHITE NOISE

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** riff.msn.com

**HASSLE FACTOR:** none (requires MSN subscription)

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** Thursdays, 6 p.m. EST

**MODERATED BY:** Riff hosts

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** they say their

## 50 BY TOPIC

### HEALTH

#### Baldness

[www.hairtoday.com](http://www.hairtoday.com)  
Females are welcome, too.

#### Vitamins Network

[vitamins.net/chat.html](http://vitamins.net/chat.html)  
Energetic conversation.

### Pregnancy and Fertility

MSN Parent Handbook  
[parent.msn.com](http://parent.msn.com)  
Change your position.

#### Transformations

[www.transformations.com](http://www.transformations.com)  
Chat about depression and other mental afflictions.

### KIDS

#### Kid's Nation Palace

[www.KidsNation.com](http://www.KidsNation.com)  
An ideal way for kids ages 7 to 17 to have fun with the new genre of virtual world chat software. Teachers can even schedule class tours.

### Blackberry Creek

AOL keyword: Blackberry  
A clubhouse for creative kids.

#### KidsLink Online

[www.kidlink.org](http://www.kidlink.org)  
IRC for kids around the world.

### LEGAL

#### Legal Pad

[www.legalpad.com](http://www.legalpad.com)  
No consultation fees.

### MEN

#### Mens-Shift

[www.mens-shift.com](http://www.mens-shift.com)  
Men get a word in.



## Let's Talk About Sex (Oh, Let's Not)

BY SCOTT ALEXANDER

Let's face it, you don't really need any directions to find sex chat online—chances are it will find you. While this may be jarring, most advances are harmless—if you ignore them, people usually get the message and leave. And if hot chat is what you're in the market for, that's your business. However, if you're not cruising for a quickie, here's a guide to escaping the cyber-groppers.

**1** Choose a gender-neutral screen name. Overtly feminine screen names (e.g., "Lolita") can create a flies-to-dung effect. If people have to ask what your sex is first, you get an immediate chance to fend them off before they say something lewd.

**2** Stay away from rooms with cryptic acronyms in their names such as m4m, b1f4b1m, gwmisob1am, domsub, s&m, or str8m4str8f.

**3** Don't be naïve about people's intentions. Chat rooms on gardening can attract their share of would-be Don Juans. If you're in a chat room on a particular subject and someone starts sending you a private message, even if it's on-topic, think about why they need to say something privately—they're probably hitting on you.

**4** Most chat systems allow you to squelch or ignore specific users. Use it.

**5** Don't reveal anything you wouldn't tell a stranger in a bus station. Giving out information such as your real name, address, phone number, or even the name of your town is a bad idea.

**6** Finally, if you do decide to try some hot chat, know what you're getting into. Establish your intentions and boundaries up front and ask your partner to do the same. Take steps to protect your anonymity (see tip 5). If they ask you prying questions, don't be afraid to make something up. Remember, they're probably lying to you about a few things as well.

musical taste is "eclectic"

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** Fan of jazz and blues (B.B. King), country (Mark O'Connor), avant-garde (Philip Glass), New Age (Jane Siberry), or even the nostalgic (Devo, Debbie Harry, XTC) connect here with your ear's desire. Every week, Riff features an interactive cyberstudio with a different major adult contemporary artist, which culminates in a live chat. The small crowd size (usually 30 to 40 people) ensures that your questions will most certainly be answered "without a lot of censoring." And while you're waiting for a chat to begin, you can play

with the Falooopinhymer, a Riff that allows you to manipulate sound files of the artist's music (Robyn Hitchcock on the banjo, anyone?).

## AMERICA ONLINE

### KIDS ONLY

#### TYKE TALK

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** AOL (keyword: kids)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** none (requires AOL subscription)

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** from 9 a.m. on  
**MODERATED BY:** scheduled chats are moderated by Kids Only staff

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** kids ages 6 to 12

Web-based chat so you know what the movie's about.

#### Cinema Chat

webcinema.org/  
cinemachat.html

In the words of site host Jonathan Sarno, "It's like

entering a Hollywood studio commissary without having to slip by the guard at the front gate."

#### MUSIC NME

www.nme.com

Chat with editors of the

internationally renowned inky rag on Thursdays at 3 p.m. GMT. That's British time.

#### House of Blues Online

www.hob.com

Put on your "blues" suede shoes.

#### POLITICS

##### Policy.com

www.policy.com

Don't miss the weekly experts.

##### Reinventing America

pathfinder.com/reinventing/  
game1/nph.html

The U.S. in your own hands.



**David Bowie**  
**AMERICA ONLINE**  
July 1, 1994

**Bowie:** I've decided that this is the only way to do interviews. I shall now only be available on this medium.

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** It's the most popular virtual clubhouse for kids. Rules (no scrolling or polling) and regulatory channels (report foul language to the keyword: kidspager) make it a safe environment for kids. Parents are encouraged *not* to participate, although they're welcome to observe. Nickelodeon, ABC Kidzine, and the Cartoon Network all sponsor chat rooms here, but there are also rooms for such kid faves as music, pets, computers, and boats. Scheduled chats feature young favorites such as cartoonist Bill Hanna (his partner is Joseph Barbera), and Melissa Joan Hart, the star of kids' must-see TV, "Sabrina, the Teenage Witch."

## VICES AND VIRTUES

### SINNERS AND SAINTS

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** www.

vicesandvirtues.com; and AOL (keyword: vicesandvirtues)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** none

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** it depends on your mood; scheduled chats usually begin at 10 a.m.

**MODERATED BY:** various V&V hosts, including V&V Friday, who is actually a chat robot (so don't Instant Message him).

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** those who like

to put a bit of play into their parlay, a bit of cheek in their chat


**WHY IT'S A BEST:** It's the concept that counts. Chat about obsession, confession, solution, and resolution (the four topical areas on the V&V forum). Moderators ask provocative questions, such as: "If you had one night on Earth left, would you use it for sex?" Chatters respond with unbridled enthusiasm. For starters, try Lunch with the Schizo Gourmet (1–2 p.m. EST)—if you have the stomach for it ("Pork rinds and scrapple, anyone?"). The later it gets, the more chatters log on, and the more the conversation degenerates; in one Thursday night chat to "obsess about the domestic," a chatter claiming to be a letter-carrier/priest typed, "Cat washes dishes after done eating." The conversation may be surreal, but you will always find a creative crowd.

## HEALTH CHANNEL

### SELF-HELP SOCIAL

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** AOL (keyword: health)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** requires AOL



**Woody Allen**  
**AMERICA ONLINE**  
November 3, 1994

**Allen:** It was a very interesting and eerie experience to be interviewed electronically. I hope that the exposure to the technology will not make me sterile.

#### MOVIES

##### @ the Movies

AOL keyword: movies  
Is it worth the price of a ticket? Talk about it here.

##### MovieLink Chat

www.movelink.com

Talk with people on this



**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** any time, day or night; check schedule for topics

**MODERATED BY:** "facilitators"

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** anyone with a physical or mental health concern

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** Unlike most HMOs, this, for once, is where you will find comprehensive coverage. Everyone from alcoholics to people living with AIDS can get live support from those who have been there and want to share their experiences and offer advice.



**Philip Glass**  
MSN RIFF  
February 13, 1997

**Host Nickmeister:** How has technology affected your composing?  
**Glass:** In fact, it doesn't change the way I write the music. At home, I have a small grand piano. I think the only piece of technology I have in my actual studio is an electric pencil sharpener.

Dozens of sympathetic folks populate the chat rooms here, but keep in mind that you are not guaranteed a professional ear; the motto here seems to be "Patient, heal thyself!" But sometimes, just talking is enough. During a recent open chat in Online Psych, one lurker admitted, "After hearing all your problems, I don't feel so bad."

## ABOUT WORK

### WATER COOLER

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** [www.aboutwork.com](http://www.aboutwork.com); AOL (keyword: aboutwork)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** none

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** Chat Room #1 is open all day; Chat Room #2 has scheduled chats starting from 11 a.m.; oddly, the chat rooms are more populated during working hours

**MODERATED BY:** various About Work hosts, including career experts

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** anyone who'd rather talk about work than do it

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** Scheduled chats (as many as 10 per day) are very specific and are usually not too crowded, which enables a dependably serious and focused conversation. Topics range from working at home to workplace backstabbing. In the free-form Chat Room #2, everyone from ceramic wholesalers to medical billers to financial consultants get together to "kick off their shoes and talk about work." Finding a job is not the purpose here. Said one moderator, "We give support to those searching for employment, and 'attaboys' when they find work."

## OLDSMOBILE CELEBRITY CIRCLE

### STARS IN THEIR EARS

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** AOL (keyword: oldsmobile)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** requires AOL

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** weeknights, 10 p.m.

**MODERATED BY:** AOL entertainment specialists

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** stargazers and starhaters

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** According to Amy Arnold, manager of AOL Live, "It is the show to be on on the Internet." Mass-market celebrities such as Rosie O'Donnell, Michael Jackson, and Jennifer Aniston are the standard fare. Big names draw crowds numbering in the thousands, but

## FWIW, :\* 8) (((((( )))

No, nobody's keyboard has exploded. Those quasi-random letters, numbers, and punctuation marks you see scrolling past your chat window are smileys and abbreviations—shorthand for the kinds of things people would normally convey not by speaking but by just being in the room with you. Think of it as slang via keyboard.

### SMILEYS (tilt your head to your left for full effect):

:) also :> or 8) or :-)	a smile
; ) also ;> or ;-)	a wink
:( also :-(	a frown
:p	sticking out tongue
:*	a kiss
((( )))	hugs

### ABBREVIATIONS

ROFL	rolling on floor laughing
GD&R	grin, duck, and run
BTW	by the way
IMHO	in my humble opinion
FWIW	for what it's worth
<g>	grin; equivalent to :) above
<vb>	very big grin
LOL	laughing out loud
L8R	later
BRB	be right back

### SPECIAL CASES

**reHi** equivalent to "hello again" to someone who has returned to chat

**F/29; M/18** sample responses to a call for "age/sex check." These two are from a 29-year-old female and an 18-year-old male.

**Word to the wise:** Don't overdo it. Pile too many of these into your chat and you stand out as someone who's learning their slang from a guide in a magazine.

—ANGELA GUNN

the average attendance is about 500 or so. Users are relegated to "rows," and their comments are seen only by others in the same row. This means that the chat experience can result in something a bit like "The Tonight Show" meets "Mystery Science Theater 3000." A recent chat with "Melrose Place" star Thomas Calabro drew more than 600 chatters, and one teenage wit entertained his fellow row-mates with a barrage of futile questions such as: "Have you ever

gotten hate mail?" Finally, the kid logged off with, "S\*\*T! My father's home!"

## PEOPLE CONNECTION

### TALK TOWER OF BABEL

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** AOL (keyword: people connection)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** requires AOL

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** whenever

**MODERATED BY:** no one

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** anyone

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** AOL's People

series. ABC and CBS don't have live chat forums.

**FoxWorld**  
[www.foxnetwork.com/ircindx.htm](http://www.foxnetwork.com/ircindx.htm)  
You can virtually live in "Melrose Place."

### SCI-FI

**Sci-Fi Channel**  
[www.scifi.com](http://www.scifi.com)  
Chat about the genre. Off-peak, the attraction is the "MST3K" Room for impromptu showings.

### SPORTS

**CBS SportsLine**  
[www.sportsline.com](http://www.sportsline.com)  
For fans of all stripes.

**Nando Sports Server**  
[www.nando.net/xwebchat/chat.html](http://www.nando.net/xwebchat/chat.html)  
Sports stats and chat.

**Just Sports for Women**  
[www.justwomen.com](http://www.justwomen.com)  
Just sports chat for women.

### SURF-AND-CHAT

**Excite Talk**  
[talk.excite.com/go.webx](http://talk.excite.com/go.webx)  
Uses Virtual Places software (still in beta), but you

can go for the quicker Java-based version, too.

### TV

**NBC**  
[www.nbc.com/chat](http://www.nbc.com/chat)  
The guests are mostly soap stars and supporting cast-members of popular NBC



Connection is still the most popular chat forum in the world. At all hours of the day and night, thousands sign on and get dropped off at a "lobby," where they can either stay and suffer through inane chitchat or head to any one of dozens of public rooms for more pleasant, meaningful conversation. Choose an interest (arts, sports, life, romance, born-again Christians), head to a room, and off you go. Combat other intellects in Philosophy ("I am going to start a fight here: God = Satan") or swap craft tips in Fiber & Needle Arts ("I enjoy cold lemonade while I sew"). In the Investing chat room, you will run into stock-traders and corporate researchers trading opinions in the no-holds-barred fashion that you will never find in a moderated chat. AOL has a bad rep for incorrigible sex chat, but if you don't like getting hit on, you can click on the "ignore" button. As one female chatter said recently, "Ignore is power."

## CHRISTIANITY ONLINE

### ONWARD CHRISTIAN CHATTERS

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** AOL (keyword: CO Live)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** requires AOL

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** any time

**MODERATED BY:** official Christianity Online hosts

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** good Christians

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** As in the real world, Christianity is big online. With an average of about 30,000 people logging in for more than 120,000 hours a month, this AOL forum is where it's at for Christian chat. Choose from several rooms, such as the Sanctuary or the Fellowship Halls I and II for brisk, sincere discussion. Chats defined by

age groups are scheduled from 5 p.m. to midnight every day of the week, but open chats are active all day. Discuss theology ("So how can you identify the true Christian congregation?") or televangelism, or share thoughts on prayer ("I'd like to have a revival in Disney World right now"). Exits are exceedingly polite: "Have to go, all...blessings on this room in the name of Jesus."

## SENIORNET

### GOLDEN OLDIES

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** AOL (keyword: seniornet), [www.seniornet.org](http://www.seniornet.org)

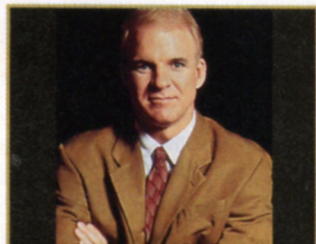
**HASSLE FACTOR:** none

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** any time on AOL

**MODERATED BY:** unmoderated


**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** men and women 55 and older

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** Each month, more than 110,000 seniors log on to this AOL forum for more than 10,000 person-hours of chat. At any time of day, you might find dozens of retirees discussing hobbies ("Anyone enjoy collecting antiques?") or health ("My gall-bladder got gone a long time ago"). Age checks are of the "Anyone



**Steve Martin**  
AMERICA ONLINE  
December 5, 1995

**Martin:** I've enjoyed being in cyberspace, although I've been in cyberspace myself for the last 25 years.



**Tyra Banks**  
**PATHFINDER'S**  
**SPORTS ILLUSTRATED**  
February 17, 1997

**Bo007:** Do you find this forum of meeting your fans enjoyable?  
**Banks:** Yeah. It's really nice because I could be using the bathroom and picking my nose and you guys would never know.  
**Hulmerist:** What are you wearing now?  
**Banks:** The bathing suit on the cover of *S.I.* With a coat because we're in New York.

in their 60s?" variety. Regulars report that they have seen many marriages and divorces, as well as "lots of deaths." According to Guy John Ruston, a Florida humorist who monitors the room to get article ideas for his syndicated column on Senior Wire, "This chat room is a positive thing."

## PARENTSOUP

### PARENTAL GUIDANCE

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** AOL (keyword: parentsoup) or [www.parentsoup.com](http://www.parentsoup.com)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** none

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** when the kids are down or your spouse is up

**MODERATED BY:** ParentSoup hosts

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** parents and prospective parents

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** There is no better way to alleviate the frustrations of parenthood than by banging away at the keyboard during naptime, and ParentSoup provides a safe, supportive community of moms and dads. The casual chat rooms can

get a bit out of hand (on a recent visit, chatters were playing virtual "Pictionary" and "mooing" to each other), but the well-organized scheduling in the Live Events room insures that chats stay on topic. Experts speak on day care, bringing up boys (or girls or teens), premature babies, stay-at-home dads, and home-schooling. Open chats are conveniently scheduled for those times when the kids are asleep (Nap Chat, 3 p.m. EST) or glued to the TV (Saturday Morning Cartoons, 10 a.m. EST). ParentSoup chat on the Web is also popular. Says one user, "Like my coffee, I really don't function that well during the day unless I've had a little ParentSoup to warm me up!"

## ASTRONET

### ZODIAC MIND TALK

**WHERE TO FIND IT:** AOL (keyword: astronet), [www.astronet.com](http://www.astronet.com)

**HASSLE FACTOR:** none

**BEST TIMES TO CHAT:** Chat rooms are open 24 hours; check schedule for reading times

**MODERATED BY:** more than 60 different professional astrologers

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** aggressively friendly astrology lovers

**WHY IT'S A BEST:** It is one of the few places in the modern world where "What's your sign?" is still an acceptable opening line. The thriving astrology community on AOL draws in more than 200,000 chatters a month to three different chat rooms. Talk serious astrology in the ASTRONET Lounge or find an astrologically compatible friend in AstroMates. But the live Reading Room is the biggest attraction. Queue up early for free readings. For prof-astrologers like Suzanne White, "real-time chats break the monotony."

### TV Guide Entertainment Network

[www.tvguide.com/bbs/](http://www.tvguide.com/bbs/)  
TV Guide columnists answer viewer questions.

"Entertainment Tonight" Online  
[MSN.et.msn.com](http://MSN.et.msn.com)

Dish the dirt with "ET" anchors and guests.

### Lifetime Television Online

[www.lifetimeonline.com](http://www.lifetimeonline.com)  
Talk about crafts, relationships, or what's on television for women.

### WOMEN

#### Women Online Worldwide

[www.womenonline.com](http://www.womenonline.com)  
Where the women of the world talk women.

#### UnderWire

[MSN.underwire.msn.com](http://MSN.underwire.msn.com)  
Microsoft's women's area;

talk about whatever is on your mind.

#### Women's Network

AOL keyword: women  
Bond with the sisterhood.

#### WRITING

##### The Writers Club

AOL keyword: writers club

Undo writers block or get your masterpiece critiqued by fellow AOLers.

#### World's Away

CompuServe Go:  
World's Away  
Uses CompuServe's  
World's Away avatar-chat.



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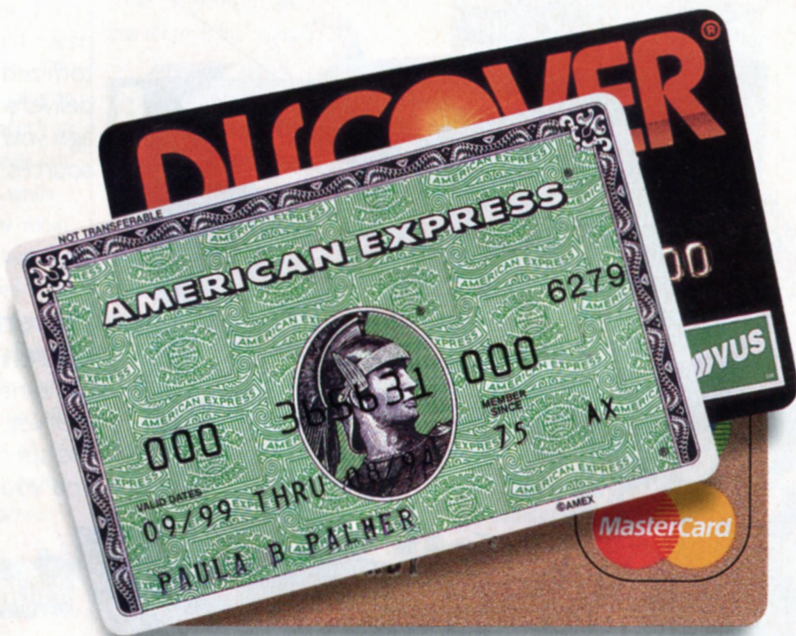
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DELETE





SAVE

A c c e s s t h e p o w e r  
<http://www.conductor.com/zd.html>



# OLDWAY

BY DAVID SHEFF

# NETWAY

## Comparing the Tried-and-True with the Net-and-New

### [GETTING A RED WINE STAIN OUT OF A WHITE SHIRT]

#### OLD WAY

- 1 Oops. Some good Cabernet was wasted on a favorite white shirt. Time is probably of the essence.
- 2 Called Mom. She said, "You should never drink red wine when you're wearing white." Thanks, Mom.
- 3 Called a neighborhood laundry and asked for advice. "Soak it in cold water. Then bring it to us."
- 4 Tried the cold water, but decided to wash the shirt using the instructions on a bottle of Clorox: a bleach soak and then a wash in hot, bleachy water.
- 5 A faint wine stain remained.

**Total time elapsed**  
2 hours, 14 minutes.

**Comments**  
Should have listened to the experts at the laundry.



#### NET WAY

- 1 Searched AltaVista for household tips and found all sorts of Black and Decker sites, none of which dealt with laundry.
- 2 Tried a more general search on Yahoo!: started with "Home," then chose "Home and Garden," and then "magazines," figuring a home-and-garden magazine might have what I needed. HomeArts (homearts.com) had a search engine, so I typed in "red wine." Found recipes, but no help with stains.
- 3 Maytag (www.maytag.com/maytag\_bin/wash\_bin/wash\_tips.html) had tips, but they were too general. A link led to The Stain Detective at Tide laundry detergent's site, ClothesLine (www.clothesline.com/stainDet/index.html). Clicked on an icon for "food and drink stains."
- 4 Using the nifty selector, chose the type of stain (wine or juice), type of material (cotton), and color (white). Clicked "Show results."
- 5 About two seconds later, got the results: "To remove Fruit, Juice, Wine from All White, has no color that can be damaged, Cotton and Cotton + any other fiber: Rinse in cold water to dilute the stain. Soak up to 30 minutes by adding 1/2 scoop Tide with Bleach per gallon of water. Weight the item with a WHITE towel to keep submerged. Use 1 scoop Tide with Bleach and fill in the hottest water safe for the fabric. Use the cotton, white, or normal cycle. Air dry and repeat procedure if stain remains." I essentially had done the first steps, so I tried the last one—the whole thing again.
- 6 It worked.

**Total time elapsed**  
14 minutes surfing and an hour and a half soaking, washing, and drying.

**Comments**  
Bookmark The Stain Detective.

#### WINNER

Net Way. Yes, I could have relied on a pro, but it's so much more satisfying (and less expensive) to do it yourself. Next: Chewing gum on spandex!



## [BUYING A HAMMOCK]

### OLD WAY

- 1 In time for summer, searched local stores for hammocks. Traditional hammocks range in price from \$70 to \$200, but happened upon a hammock imported from the Yucatán in Mexico for \$45. It was the most beautiful and comfortable.
- 2 Charged it, headed home, set it up. Opened a bottle of beer.

**Total time elapsed**  
2 hours, 27 minutes shopping and driving time.

**Comments**  
Worth every second.



### NET WAY

- 1 Searched "Hammocks" on Yahoo! Most companies had pictures.
- 2 Directly from the Yucatán, hammocks similar to the ones in the import store were available at a fraction of the price. Tried Hammocks by Rada ([dyred.sureste.com/rada/rada.htm](http://dyred.sureste.com/rada/rada.htm)). Gorgeous, and a bargain: \$8.49 for a single, \$12.99 for a double; however, shipping had to be added: \$8 airmail, \$22 overnight.
- 3 Placed a credit card order online. Three days later, the hammock arrived via Federal Express (slower delivery would have been \$14 cheaper). Still, at \$30.49, it was a great price.
- 4 An e-mail from Mexico asked if we were happy with our hammock. We were.

**Total time elapsed**  
12 minutes online; 3 days for delivery.

**Comments**  
Even more beautiful than the one in the store.

### WINNER

A tie. For price and convenience, Net Way; for an instant snooze on an impulse purchase, Old Way.

## [DECIDING WHETHER TO REFINANCE A HOME MORTGAGE NOW]

### OLD WAY

- 1 Thinking about refinancing, wanted to compare payments for various loans at current rates.
- 2 Called a loan broker, who explained the rate choices and terms. He asked for the details about our current loan and home and promised to fax us the numbers.
- 3 They arrived the next day. The new rates didn't justify the cost of refinancing.

**Total time elapsed**  
45 minutes, plus a day awaiting the faxed information.

**Comments**  
Loan brokers do the work and are paid by the financial institution.

### WINNER

Though the results were similar, the Net Way was quicker and provided more information.

### NET WAY

- 1 There were a bunch of loan calculators online listed on the Yahoo! directory.
- 2 Randomly tried what turned out to be a remarkable tool at a site called FinanCenter ([www.financenter.com/newhomes.htm](http://www.financenter.com/newhomes.htm)). Made a selection—"Am I better off refinancing?"—from a number of choices (including "Which is better: a 15- or 30-year mortgage?" and "How much will my payments be?").
- 3 Filled out an online form that asked about my current loan and home that automatically compared it to currently available rates.
- 4 An instant report appeared with an analysis of the costs of a new loan, tax benefits, and cost difference. From the information reported, I concluded (before I saw the faxed results from the broker) that rates aren't low enough to justify the expense of refinancing.

**Total time elapsed**  
14 minutes.

**Comments**  
When I received the broker's fax the next day, I found that the numbers were similar to the ones I retrieved at the online calculator.





# THE Net Effect of

When the Heaven's Gate tragedy gave the off-line press an opportunity to pounce on the Net, pounce they did. Here's a reflective look at the aftermath of a new-media firestorm

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

## Blaming the Web

The cult used the Internet to spread its weird beliefs and make a living. But fears that the Net is reaching out to grab your kids are exaggerated. By STEVEN LEVY



## Newsweek



USA TODAY

## Web site suggests credibility

## Interest in cult causes Internet traffic jams

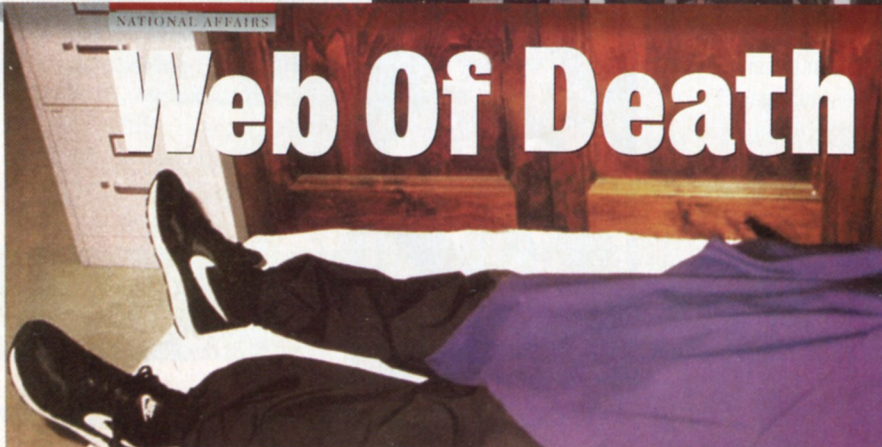
were found near banks of...  
Sancho Santa Fe, Calif.  
cult watchers.  
group used the World Wide Web for both its business,  
higher Source, and its Web page. Heaven's Gate, which  
d to snag new recruits. It used buzzwords designed to  
owners whose interest ranged from UFOs and conspir-

U.S. NEWS

# www.masssuicide.com

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

## Web Of Death



After a half-dozen major news outlets had called for comments, Nick Rothenberg, CEO of Los Angeles-based **W3-design**, finally complained to a journalist, "If this had occurred with a group of boating enthusiasts who happened to be out on a yacht worshipping Hale-Bopp, would you call up a bunch of marina owners?" Tristan Louis, director of business development at **EarthWeb**, responded with similar frustration, sighing, "When Jonestown happened, was Kool-Aid responsible?"

To professionals like Rothenberg and Louis, and to many average Internet users, the coverage of the California tragedy seemed like just the latest Internet bashing by the mainstream press. *YIL's* own guest columnists, cult experts Jim Siegelman and Flo Conway, speculated on CNN that the relationship users have to their computers could create an intimacy that might leave them susceptible to recruitment by "spiritual predators" (see next page). Couldn't the same be said of *books*? As astronomer Dr. Robert Hurt, appalled by the emphasis on both the Internet and Hale-Bopp, puts it, "Being crazy yourself does not necessarily implicate all of your interests."

Brian Nelson, host and correspondent of the CNN show "Computer Connection," says that when the story broke, "They immediately asked me to go down and man a computer. We needed to talk about the Internet connection....When we could finally get into the site, it was a major element because it contained all the writings. It wasn't because it was a Web site—it was because it had the information."



# Heaven's Gate

BY KAREN HEYMAN

"It could have just as easily have been the Comet Cult," says Stephen O'Leary, an associate professor in the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Southern California who specializes in both new religions and religion on the Internet. "I've been studying new religious movements for three years. I don't know of anybody who was ever converted by a Web page."

On ABC's "Nightline," the cult members were described as "people who would have hung back at an office Christmas party. People on the fringe." Stereotypical nerds, in fact, whom "everyone" knows to be antisocial. And what is the ultimate antisocial act?

"Now it's not just 'cyberspace will make your son a nerd,' it's 'cyberspace will make your son kill himself,'" sighs David Silver, director of the **Resource Center for Cyberculture Studies**. The mainstream coverage of the Heaven's Gate suicides may represent the ultimate marginalization of the computer nerd in American society. "We have to marginalize them—group suicide is demonstrably strange—there's a discomfort with examining the Christian part of their belief system. The rest fits in with the need to demonize them," explains O'Leary. Christopher Harper, who covered the 1978 Jonestown suicides for *Newsweek*, is now a professor of journalism at NYU, and he gives his former press colleagues no quarter. "The media generally get things wrong. I spent all day listening to ABC News Radio saying 'Little is known about this cult,' when they were profiled in *The New York Times Magazine* in 1976." Harper feels the current coverage is just another example of how the American

public is ill-served by its press. "The media underestimate the intelligence of their audience every day. That's why people don't read newspapers and watch television news as much as they used to, and they turn to computers for complicated, unfiltered information."

But there have long been many posters on Usenet who take it one step further, ascribing a conspiracy on the part of old media to "get" new media, destroying a competitor before it can become established. Says Harper: "I wish old media were that smart."

In reply, CNN's Nelson scores one point for the press. "I think there's a

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**The 80s turned computers into benign helpmeets, but in the 90s, the Net has made us nervous all over again**

---

general discomfort with the notion that the Internet can reach into people's homes and espouse a philosophy." It's a provocative point; and if that discomfort truly exists, what are its roots?

"There's a long tradition of new technology being seen as either completely utopian or completely dystopian—it's either the New Athens or something that will tear us apart," says Silver. Much of that "tearing apart" is the fear that technological change will leave many behind. For most American and European workers from the 1950s through the 1970s, the one equation computers seemed most adept at performing was: one big machine

equals thousands of lost jobs. If the 80s turned computers into small, benign helpmeets, in the 90s the Net has made us nervous all over again. Professor Martin Irvine, director of the **Communication, Culture, and Technology Program at Georgetown University**, explains, "We attribute 'agency' to computers. It's as if they are some sort of independent, self-aware beings, autonomous from their makers—if we connect them, they will create a force that overwhelms us."

But for those who are comfortable online, the current brouhaha raises another fear: further government regulation of Internet content, or, as it has been dubbed, "Son of the CDA." On "This Week," ABC News special correspondent Cokie Roberts commented, "I predict congressional hearings within a month." But a leadership aide suggests that, on this one at least, Congress may actually back off. In the aide's opinion, it was easy to call for regulations on pornography, with its obvious moral overtones, but cults come far too close to religious issues for members to act. Another aide agrees, adding, "At the time of the original debate on the CDA, I don't think people were informed enough about the Internet. I think now they're beginning to see what the stakes are."

Another Hill insider points out that the original CDA was passed only because of horse-trading over the Telecommunications Bill; as a stand-alone, the new bill has little chance.


And that may be the most insidious problem of all with the coverage. By making us all worry so much about cults inspiring a possible "Son of the CDA,"



we are distracted from what ultimately could be more important legislation. Matt Raymond, press secretary to Senator Conrad Burns [R-Montana, cochairman of the **U.S. Congressional Internet Caucus**], believes the encryption debate is far more serious. "We are not going to see any potential for growth on the Internet unless we can give people security on private information."

Perhaps the greatest irony in all of this is that there is nothing either new or unique about combining a monastic and a digital lifestyle. Last summer, both *Yahoo! Internet Life* [July/August



'96, page 65] and *Wired* ran stories on cybermonks supporting themselves by designing Web pages and selling products online. Unfortunately, even if the tone of the coverage changes—and there seems to be a developing backlash to the backlash as many publications ran Don't-Blame-the-Internet pieces—the damage may already have been done. Do you remember, asks Christopher Harper, that *Newsweek* reported it wasn't Kool-Aid at all? It was a British product called Flavour-Aide. 

### SITES IN THIS STORY

W3-DESIGN  
[www.w3-design.com](http://www.w3-design.com)

EARTHWEB  
[www.earthweb.com](http://www.earthweb.com)

RESOURCE CENTER FOR CYBERCULTURE STUDIES  
[otal.umd.edu/~rccs/](http://otal.umd.edu/~rccs/)

COMMUNICATION, CULTURE, AND TECHNOLOGY  
PROGRAM AT GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
[www.georgetown.edu/grad/CCT/](http://www.georgetown.edu/grad/CCT/)

U.S. CONGRESSIONAL INTERNET CAUCUS  
[www.house.gov/white/internet\\_caucus/](http://www.house.gov/white/internet_caucus/)

# A Wake-Up

**A contrarian view: Can we afford to dismiss *any* notion that all the hours we spend in virtual worlds can have physical or psychological consequences?**

BY JAMES SIEGELMAN & FLO CONWAY

**C**yberspace. Star date: April 4, 1997. The media tsunami has abated. We two, along with other "cult expert" TV talking heads, are being shuffled off-stage until the next "doomsday cult" spectacular barges into a home theater near you. But while the Net has survived a heavy pounding of hits by those eager to blame it for faults that exist within ourselves (or at least in the minds of the self-promoters, self-proclaimed messiahs, and delusional powermongers among us), questions still hover around Heaven's Gate.

The consensus is in on the Internet's actual role. Yes, the Net was a source of income for the sect. Yes, the Net was used as a recruiting tool by the sect—one possible nibble among the 39 victims and, apparently, few other recruiting successes. So yes, the mainstream media leaped to some early misguided conclusions and overheated headlines. This is understandable, in our view, given the Net buzzwords that were so easily attached to this tragedy at an early stage. The reaction of the Internet media, pointing out the absurdity of some of the old media's coverage, was also understandable.

But before it all fades away, with each camp retreating to its own tent secure that in the end it was all just a meaningless freak show, we'd like to pose a

question that goes to the heart of this issue. Is there anything (nothing?) that should concern us when it comes to the possible organic effect that the Internet, and computerized communication technologies generally, can have on human behavior and the human mind?

For two decades we have been studying the methods and effects of the new generation of cults. As part of our work, we have tried to understand how people in groups of every kind may be shaped, influenced, manipulated, and, in extreme instances, pressed to the breaking point by the everyday processes of information exchange and communication.

In the 70s, we saw a generation of spiritual empire-builders and self-help entrepreneurs cobble together powerful new aggregations of brand-name products for the systematic alteration of human awareness. We also saw those eclectic new cults and therapies that promised only enlightenment propel their adherents into states of submission, delusion, and vulnerability to suggestion. In the 80s, this new "human technology" was disseminated further, mainly by TV, into the wider realms of religion, politics, and slick "New Age" products and enterprises. Some provided seemingly miraculous benefits, some proved to be flimflam, and others were downright dangerous.

In the 90s, all that systematized knowledge and human technology is replicating and mutating worldwide at lightning speed across the Internet. So it seems fair to ask: How is this intimate new communication medium shaping and changing us as human beings? What are the cumulative organic effects of extended electronic interaction?

As part of our research, we have cataloged reports of the PC revolution's deep-reaching effects on the minds, brains, and bodies of computer users. For all the good and for all the progress, there are side effects. First



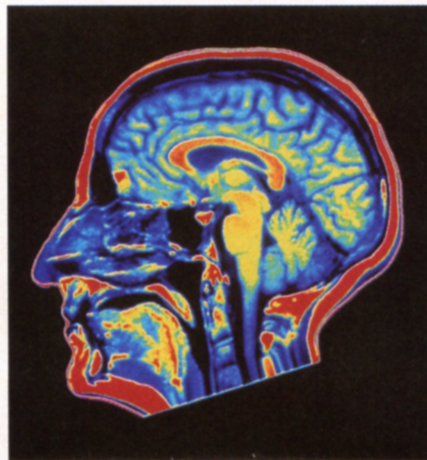
# Call for the Web?

came anecdotal accounts of "technostress" as people made the transition from old industrial-age jobs and professions (the symptoms that follow can read like the warning brochure of a new drug advertisement, though at least in medicine such effects are tracked): sudden disorientation and social displacement; difficulties learning, training, and concentrating; and disruptions to personal and family relationships and to the traditional life of communities. A study cited in the *Harvard Medical School Bulletin* in the mid-1980s found that 20 percent of computer workers became compulsive in their interaction with machines. Then followed the social scientific studies about the developmental effects of video games and other electronic devices on young children. We believe the Internet changes the rules again.

As human beings, we have an organic imperative to communicate—we must communicate to live. That's why we reach out ceaselessly to one another, to other species; that's why some of us reach out to angels and aliens. The working organization of our brains, set only minimally at birth, mandates that we engage in an active, lifelong metabolism—change and exchange—of information with other people and the universe around us. When that metabolism becomes unbalanced or stops altogether, our minds are organically affected and, in extreme instances, damaged.

We have documented these deep-reaching effects in interviews with long-time cult members and in our study of emerging forms of communication-based "information disease."<sup>†</sup> In the years since, we and other researchers have begun to observe similar clinical symptoms and cognitive effects among

people in diverse real-world populations as well as others immersed for prolonged periods in engulfing electronic information environments, such as computer programmers, computer-using professionals, and even casual computer users. A veteran video-game programmer told us of the mental burnout he experienced from his hyperintensive work: "My mind goes blank...the engine won't turn over. There's frustration, depression. You get frazzled. I get weeks where I can't work." Other researchers have named and documented phenomena such as "TV trance" and related



"dissociative states" among children and adults engaged in prolonged, close-up interaction with electronic devices. Both journalistic accounts and systematic psychological studies have documented responses among computer users which we believe mirror those of subjects in clinical hypnotic states: intensely focused attention, reduced blink rate, slowed breathing, time distortions, and states of heightened receptivity and suggestibility as well.

Which brings us back to our questions about the Net, and for Netizens generally after Heaven's Gate: Does life online tend to make some among us, young or old, even marginally more vulnerable to suggestion or other

forms of covert communication control? Does this intimate new communication medium, with its speeding data and bedazzling images, make us any more trusting or more receptive to rumors, unsubstantiated data, undocumented claims, sexual come-ons, or pie-in-the-sky spiritual promises? Before dismissing these questions on the grounds that they feed the anti-Internet crowd, before arguing that software patches and a bit of parental concern are enough to allay all concerns, we suggest the Internet community at least begin the debate, perhaps in the pages and Web sites of publications like this one.

We believe that, no matter which way passions run today, Heaven's Gate will come to be seen as a wake-up call for the Web. This real-world tragedy with its, at worst, only marginal hyperlinked causes and effects, creates no increased need for new laws, regulations, or restrictions on the flow of information. What it does require is a new awareness and vigilance on the part of every Netizen to the subtle ways in which our minds and emotions may be shaped or manipulated by the messages we consume and digest online daily. Hopefully, that new awareness will spur Net debate toward a new ethic for online communication, and perhaps that debate can lead the way in off-line domains as well.

This tragedy may teach us something about ourselves and the new global technological culture we have designed and wired in our own image. It may make each of us more responsible for the messages and meanings we exchange with one another, and more aware of our humanity and its unequaled place in nature. Y

*Jim Siegelman and Flo Conway are the authors of Snapping: America's Epidemic of Sudden Personality Change (Stillpoint Press, 1995).*

<sup>†</sup> See: "Information Disease: Have Cults Created a New Mental Illness?" *Science Digest*, February 1982, which won a National Mental Health Association Media Award; and "Information Disease: A New Paradigm for Communication and Mental Health," a paper presented to the International Communication Association in Honolulu, Hawaii, May 1985.



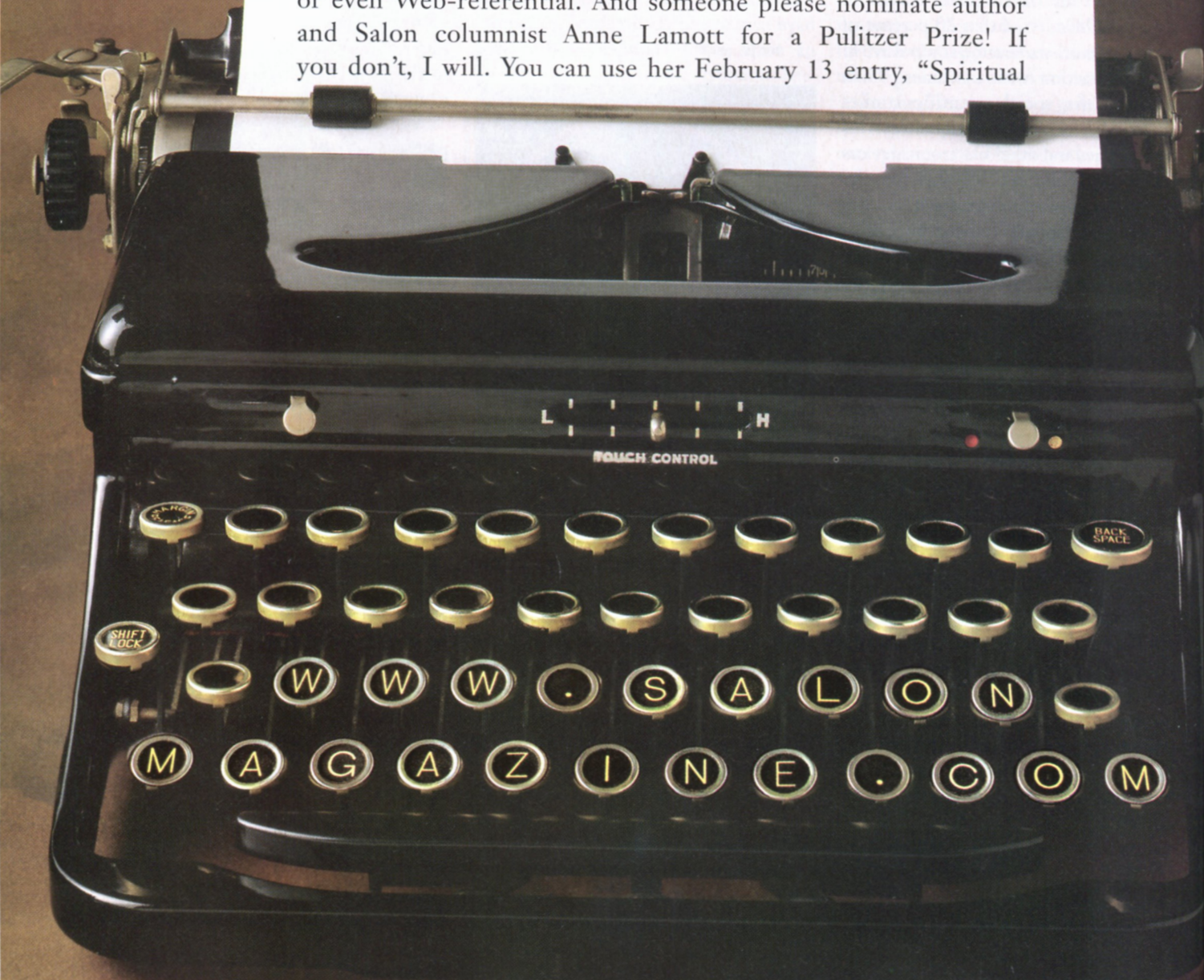
# salon

## Charge of the **Lit Brigade**

by Derek A. Baker

**L**et's be honest here. It has a pretentious name. It had a pretentious, artsy mission, at least in the beginning. Some—though not all—of the people it attracts are pretentious. And, despite its editors' protestations to the contrary, it still has an old-media print bias regarding what people want to see on the Web.

That said, Salon ([www.salonmagazine.com](http://www.salonmagazine.com)) has the best writing online, consistently, daily. Refreshingly, it is rarely self-referential, or even Web-referential. And someone please nominate author and Salon columnist Anne Lamott for a Pulitzer Prize! If you don't, I will. You can use her February 13 entry, "Spiritual





# A N A T O M Y O F A W E B S I T E



Chemotherapy," as Exhibit A.

*Yahoo! Internet Life* isn't the first to cite Salon as a most pleasant destination on the Web. *Advertising Age* said it was the "Online Magazine of the Year." *Time* magazine called it "The Best Site of 1996." And in "Hit and Run LXVI," Suck, of course, weighed in that *Time*'s accolade was "the news-magazine for people who don't read, patting the head of the Web site for people who don't surf." Sniff.

Salon often gets derided as a new media manqué, because (pick one): a) many pieces and columns are stand-alone reads, with no external links; b) you would be shocked to find Shockwave therein; c) it actually reads like something you might find on dead, pulped trees; d) it doesn't genuflect at the altars of Marshall McLuhan, Jacques Derrida, or Michel Foucault. These are the theorists that Suck, HotWired, and other insecure digerati take as their patron saints, tacitly or not. But read a column in Suck, then read a column in Salon—which one is pretentious?

Says the editor-in-chief at another major, but not exactly competing, Web site: "David Talbot [Salon's founder, editor, and CEO] is a genius at getting ink. Getting your name out there is a big factor in success on the Web. And I think their Media Circus column is a must-read for anyone who wants to keep up with media gossip." In the end, however, this Web editor, who wishes to remain unnamed, has familiar complaints: It's "a beautiful print magazine—on the Web. It's too literary." And, really, it's just too...all together now...pretentious.

Talbot admits the site began with an eggheaded mission: "We were a little more books- and author-oriented in the beginning. Pieces were longer. Kind of more *New Yorker*-ish. Longer essays. We still will run stories that go up to 2,000 words or a little longer sometimes, but I think we're moving back toward a newspaper paradigm, away from the *New Yorker* mold." By which he means shorter material, offered daily, with more news commentary and cultural criticism.

When Talbot says "moving back," he doesn't mean "away from the Web." He and many other Salonistas cut their teeth at the old *San Francisco Examiner*, especially its Sunday magazine and arts and entertainment section. So for him and other staffers, daily publication of shorter, personal-style pieces is familiar territory. "I think the medium lends itself to provocative, opinionated writing. Reviews and Op-Ed kinds of columns are a natural for the Web."

When you go looking for the provocative, you can't ask for much more than Camille Paglia, who writes Salon's "Ask Camille" advice-if-you-dare column. Paglia embraced the Internet early on [see *YIL*, September '96, page 64], but it took a trusted editor (Talbot, who published her at the *Examiner* when she still saw herself as an embattled academic) to coax her into a regular online gig. "Camille is Sicilian, she's loyal. She remembers who took care of her and who supported her when she needed it," Talbot says, explaining why she agreed to write for him and the debut issue of Salon back in November of 1995. "And she wasn't like, 'Oh, my quill pen, it's running out of ink.'"

"Provocative" comes in many flavors, of course. Standard Salon varieties are sex (Courtney Weaver in her "Unzipped" column, bemoaning men's inability to discern the clitoris) and religion (Anne Lamott in "Word by Word," on reluctantly accepting Christ in her life: "F— it. Come in. I quit"), but "provocative" also can be a slap at the accepted mythologies. At Salon, the medium isn't necessarily the message.

"We know we swim in the soup; it's an interesting bowl to swim in," Talbot says, referring to the digital world, "and we're expanding our coverage of the Internet and new technology with a section called '21st.'" To create this new-tech section, Salon hired Andrew Leonard away from HotWired, and he and Scott Rosenberg run a Thursday-appearing department that, in one of its first incarnations, pointed out what they saw as the pin-headedness of virtual reality creators and the Net's ardor for non-linear communication.

Their assessment: most multimedia suffers from being too much about itself, about the "how" and not the "what"; frankly, they felt, multimedia is too...wait for it...pretentious.

As Talbot says, while Salon acknowledges the medium, it has no interest in playing cheerleader. And it is not alone. Talbot notes that even HotWired [see *YIL*, May '97, page 87] has grown up from its gee-whiz adolescence in the last year or so, to the point where he says he enjoys reading it (along with Suck and Feed) on a daily basis.

The current state of Salon is rosy indeed, despite the fact it's not yet the money-maker ESPNET SportsZone or Playboy.com are. It just received a second round of funding from Adobe and Hambrecht & Quist, the Silicon Valley venture capital firm, and is looking

ZACH TRENNHOLM



James Carville

MIMI JACOBS



Anne Lamott



David Talbot

ZACH TRENNHOLM



Camille Paglia

**In the galaxy of Web site awards, we offer our five stars just twelve times a year. Here's this month's in-depth look at a Web site or service that is truly distinctive.**

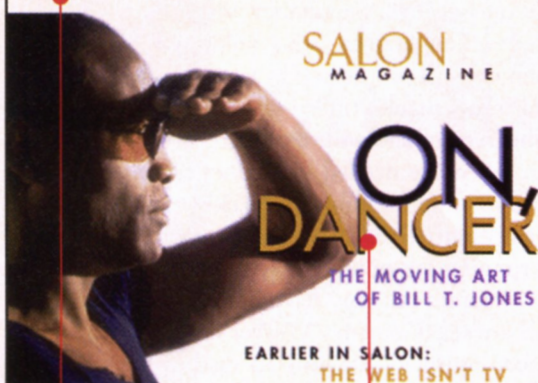


# zooming in

## If Your Browser Were a Coffee Table...

...then Salon, aka salon1999.com, would take pride of place next to the Pottery Barn fruit bowl. The upmarket, middle-brow content is reflected in the zine's cool opening pages.

TABLE TALK COLUMNISTS 21ST TASTE WANDERLUST GAMES COMICS CONTACT US ARCHIVES



EARLIER IN SALON:  
THE WEB ISN'T TV

WEEKEND, MARCH 25-30, 1997

**WANDERLUST** Love in the hot zone

**MOVIES** "Devil's Own" | "Daytrippers"

**VOWELL** Pop music's food fetishes

**MYSTERY** Murder in a too-hip art gallery

**NEWS** Mass suicide: Cult-Web connection

**MEDIA** Heaven's Gate: Not that weird?

**BOOKS** Robert Stone's stoned stories

**MUSIC** Dinosaur Jr.: El Burnout Supremo

**BLUE GLOW** Killer bunnies!

### Word Up

Typical of the clarity throughout the magazine, the contents strip doesn't waste words.

### Heads Up

Again reflecting Salon's traditional pedigree, the cover-lines have a nicely upmarket feel.

### Playing Up

Web games in a literary zine? Think cross-words, puzzles, and tough quizzes. And we mean *think*.

to strengthen its partnership with Borders, the primary sponsor. There are also discussions with search engines about providing content in exchange for links (a certain Y-titled search directory among them). And recent reader surveys look promising indeed: 43 percent of Salon's readers are female (about 10 percent more than the Web average); they make about \$67,000 a year; 80 percent have a college degree; and the average visitor spends a very healthy 20 minutes at Salon—even though content is only one click away from the front page. No wonder *Advertising Age* gave it such a high honor.

"Whither Salon" is another question, however. In December 1996, Michael O'Donnell, a software sales VP most recently at Sega and previously at Mindscape, Softkey, and GeoWorks, joined the operation as president and publisher. O'Donnell speaks in the sort of animatronics jargon that marketers love—"establish a brand," "leverage content," "create new editorial initiatives"—and Dilbert detests. And he has big plans for

Salon-As-We-Know-It. For example: "We plan today to keep our current magazine free to the users. It would be risky to introduce a paid circulation at the front end," he says, in no small understatement. "At the same time, we're hearing from our readers that they'd be willing to pay for the product." O'Donnell claims reader surveys show that Salon die-hards would pay for a print version of the magazine. At the moment, any charge would be for a "premium"-style subscription—whether print, access to special forums, or other "affinity" programs—while the current site would still be based on an advertising model. But wait, there's more.

One of O'Donnell's plans is to "take advantage of online commerce." So, as he says, a reader might read one of Don George's travel pieces in the new Wanderlust section, then book a ticket. Salon gets a cut, the "strategic travel partner" gets a cut, and that elusive "synergy" word gets another mention in yet another annual report. O'Donnell was obviously hired to lend an air of "24/7" to

Salon, and he's already lining up ad sales reps in major markets.

In taped interviews, O'Donnell seems to have a thorough understanding of where Salon has been and where it needs to go to be successful for the investors; whether he understands the publishing world remains to be seen. "It isn't *The New Yorker* on the Web," he says of his new adopted home. "Not that there's anything wrong with *The New Yorker*, but there's really not a magazine equivalent [to Salon] in print. We do cover books and we do have a literary orientation and a style that's very appealing to people who are literate and into that, but we also cover music—everything from rock 'n' roll and pop to jazz and classical. In the same week we reviewed Madonna's *Evita* sound track and a new Pavarotti CD. And we cover politics, food, and technology." If this sounds suspiciously similar to the kind of roundup editor Tina Brown might have in a typical *New Yorker*—replacing "music" with "movies"—cut the guy some slack; he's new to publishing, by his own admission.

And he's right: Salon isn't *The New Yorker* on the Web. For one thing, *The New Yorker* doesn't have a burgeoning discussion area (perhaps some enterprising Web site should create one, in the same way *Spy* magazine once had a letters-to-*The-New-Yorker*-editor section because *The New Yorker* didn't). Salon, however, has Table Talk, where readers will discuss, harangue, and post ad nauseam. And because Talbot values "a writer who can bleed," in his words, Salon's tone is as distinctive and unique as its writers want to be—the more they reveal, the better Salon gets. "Good writing is good writing, on or off the Web," he says. With that credo, he has managed to attract schoolteachers, retired postal workers, and lunchtime surfers spending an average of 20 minutes each time they visit Salon. You can call it middlebrow, and you can call it Way Old Media masquerading as New. But just don't call Salon...you know the drill...pretentious.



# TOUCHED BY THE NET

## The Accidental Altruist

Being the full-time caretaker of her Alzheimer's-stricken mother-in-law is a demanding job, and Susan Grossman needed to do something for herself. "I needed an outlet," she says. She started ALZwell ([www.alzwell.com](http://www.alzwell.com)), a Web site rich in resources for other caregivers. Besides information about the debilitating disease, there are escapist Web activities and an "Anger Wall" where visitors can let off steam. "This site is my answer to how I'm going to cope," says Grossman, who tries to add something new each day. "I keep researching and learning more and more that helps me understand, and I now have all kinds of people writing me and telling me they find my page a godsend. I feel good about helping others, though I did not set out to."

Amidst all the hoopla, some ordinary people are doing extraordinary things online

BY LISA NAPOLI

## A Little Piece of Home

Although he left his beloved homeland of Czechoslovakia almost 50 years ago, Josef Schrabal has written a love letter, of sorts, to his country ([www.columbia.edu/~js322/czech.html](http://www.columbia.edu/~js322/czech.html)). The 74-year-old immigrant has compiled a list of links to all things Czech, from the mundane—Prague subway maps, historical facts, and daily newspapers—to the sublime. Eleanor's Kitchen (*kuchyne*, in Czech) is a peek at his wife's recipes; her vanilla crescent pastries reportedly elicited e-mail praise from Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel.

## Aiming High

How can surfing the Web lead to flying a plane? Ask the clever members of Boy Scout Explorer Post #924 in Memphis, Tennessee ([members.aol.com/post924/index.htm](http://members.aol.com/post924/index.htm)), whose 30 members are eager to learn all they can

about flying. Finding that fundraising ventures such as plane washes and car waxes weren't garnering enough cash to subsidize this costly hobby, they started a sweepstakes Web site where visitors can win free prizes. Just how does that bring in money? "We hope to draw a high enough number of hits that someone would want to buy an ad on our site. Every hit counts," says member Charlie Pearson, who aspires to a career in aviation. Each week, there are new prizes.

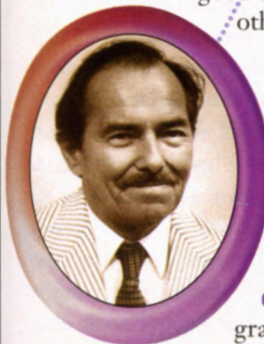
## Putting Movies to a New Test

Promotions for the Spike Lee film *Girl 6* inspired Barry Joseph to create Progressive

Movie Renting: A Values-Based Video Guide ([www.progressivevideo.org](http://www.progressivevideo.org)). "The advertising pumped [the movie] as fluff. I avoided it like the plague," he says. "The film turned out to be an intense look at sexism, racism, and art." Frustrated with the way movies are marketed and figuring he wasn't alone, Joseph created an alternative "ratings and review" resource that asks tough questions: Does the movie promote respect for gays and lesbians? Is there an awareness of economic inequality and a concern for social justice? Joseph heartily encourages input and contributions of reviews.

## Getting Kids Excited About Technology

By day, he is vice president of a bank—but in his free time, Ewart Newton is using the Web to help underprivileged kids in New Jersey see the world in new ways. A volunteer with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Union County ([www.ncnatural.com/UCYOUTH/](http://www.ncnatural.com/UCYOUTH/)), he created the program's Web site and, along with Union County Boys and Girls Club executive director Russ Triolo, is spearheading such projects as the Virtual Classroom, which enabled kids in the after-school program to conduct a virtual fashion show with their peers in schools in Japan and Canada. Next up: a Virtual Swim Meet, where teams from Australia, England, and the U.S. will "compete."





# My Doctor is an Avatar

Comedy Central's  
squiggly  
cartoon shrink,  
**Dr. Katz,**  
is in the house  
and on  
the Net

BY BOB STRAUSS

If ever a celebrity was ripe for an identity crisis, it is stand-up comic Jonathan Katz. Don't recognize the name? Well, you may know him better as "Dr. Katz: Professional Therapist," the squiggly cartoon headshrinker whose on-screen patients have included Garry Shandling, David Mamet, and Winona Rider. Since his show debuted two years ago on Comedy Central, Katz has been in a situation that should ring oddly familiar to die-hard Netheads: more people know him as his computer-generated TV persona (his avatar, if you will) than as a flesh-and-blood human being.

That's what made it so disconcerting to see Katz—who is every bit as short, balding, and self-effacing as his imaginary counterpart—at a live promotional appearance recently at New York's Jewish Museum, where he enchanted a sell-out crowd with one-liners, clips from the show, and a short narrative history of the "Dr. Katz" phenomenon (which had its origins five years ago as a brief, crude animated short called "The Biography of Mr. Katz"). Although he didn't actually squiggle—a computer-generated effect that, he joked, made some people at Comedy Central seasick—Katz, standing calm and motionless behind the podium, radiated the eerie serenity of his alter ego. But that is where the resemblance ended: when asked by an audience member what Mr. Katz shared with

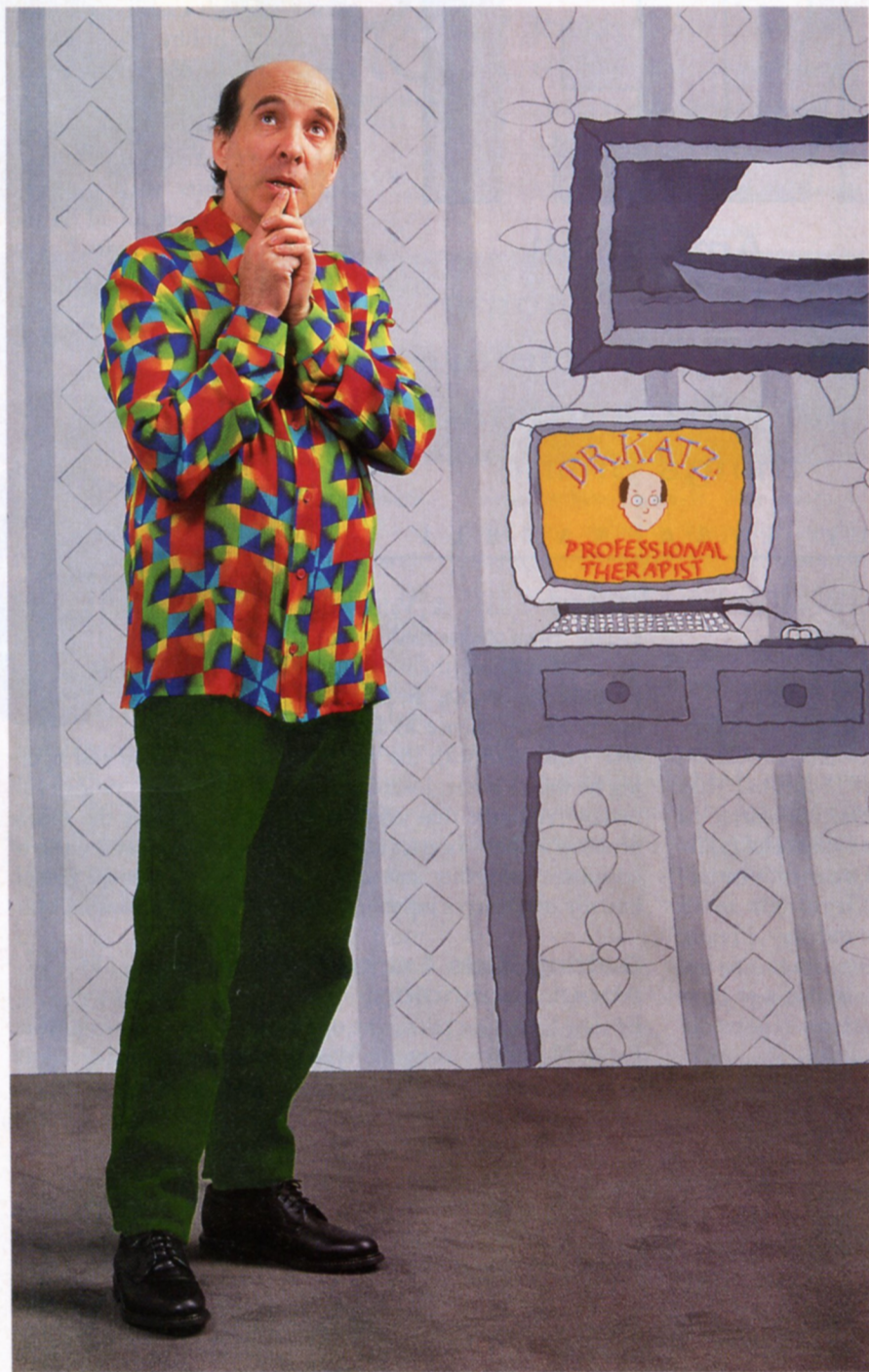


PHOTO BY STEVE MARSEL



Dr. Katz, the former responded, "We're very alike, except I'm not a good listener and people don't like to confide in me."

Another thing that distinguishes the real Jonathan Katz is his high comfort level with technology, since he says he has been prowling the Web regularly for the last couple of years. (He occasionally even works high-tech hardware into his stand-up routine: "My wife's parents are Orthodox Jews. They have two sets of satellite dishes.") He says his favorite activity is ego-surfing: "I type in my name and look for myself. It's fun, but it's lonely." But even this harmless diversion is complicated by the fact that the world harbors at least one other high-profile Jonathan Katz, "a gay playwright in San Francisco." Katz also likes to visit search engines and plug in the names of people he has lost track of—but, the warily married comic says, "I try not to use the expression 'old girlfriends.' When they first get married, men have this crazy notion that their wives will be friendly with their ex-girlfriends. It's not true."

You might think, since he has so many hip celebrities on his show, that Katz would prepare himself by checking out their doings, official and unofficial, in cyberspace. But you would be wrong: "I'm one of the first guys I know who had the courage to say to people, 'I don't want to check out your Web site.'" Katz says he'll stay in touch with guests via e-mail occasionally, but he hasn't had much success dropping in on fan pages ("I once visited a Janeane Garofalo site, and I was asked to leave"). All in all, Katz says, "My interests are very strange and varied. There was a time when I was obsessed with electric bikes. It's a bike for a guy who wants to get in shape very gradually."


A man of many talents (besides riding electric bikes, that is), Katz's latest venture is a daily "Dr. Katz" comic strip, which appears in various newspapers across the country and includes a URL for Comedy Central's official Web site. But unlike Scott

Adams's "Dilbert," Katz won't print his personal e-mail address, which remains a closely guarded secret. "When it comes down to it," he says, "I'm not that adventurous."

It's the kind of thing that would make Sigmund Freud rotate at 78 rpm, but thanks to relentless advances in modern technology, it is actually possible to receive intensive psychotherapy via e-mail. Whether or not this works is debatable—heck,



"I'm one of the first guys I know who had the courage to say to people, 'I don't want to check out your Web site'"

whether or not real-time therapy works is debatable—but a quick search of the Web shows that there is no lack of practitioners with time on their hands and high-speed modem connections. Many of the cybershrinks in the sidebar to the right charge big bucks for their virtual services, and consider this: if you're wary about transmitting credit card information over the Internet, why in the world would you e-mail that recurring dream in which you're being chased by spear-carrying Amazons? 

## Cybershrinks

### ASK DR. LOVE

[www.askdrlove.com](http://www.askdrlove.com)

Specialty: Well, duh. Qualifications: Dr. Love (aka Dr. Jamie Turndorf) is a syndicated advice columnist. Pitch: "My scientifically proven techniques have helped thousands of couples navigate the minefields that destroy most relationships."

### DR. G PSYCH-LINK

[www.drpsychlink.com](http://www.drpsychlink.com)

Specialty: "Any dilemma related to life's experiences." Qualifications: Dr. G (aka Gary Bresee, Ph.D. Inc., "A Psychological Corporation") is a "nationally known psychologist with colleagues in a wide variety of areas." Pitch: "Remember, professional help for your problems is at your fingertips or just a short phone call away."

### HEADWORKS:

#### ADVENTURES IN INNER SPACE

[www.headworks.com](http://www.headworks.com)

Specialty: "Your mind and how it works." Qualifications: None, apparently. "This is a small site, maintained by a staff of one guy in Calverton, Maryland." Pitch: "If you choose to use this site to improve your life, your success, or lack thereof, [it] is entirely your responsibility."

### PSYCH-TALK

[www2.psych-talk.com/psych-talk](http://www2.psych-talk.com/psych-talk)

Specialty: the "real you" ("The average person is authentic only 5 percent of the time"). Qualifications: David J. French, Ph.D., is "an experienced clinical psychologist and corporate consultant on the human condition." Pitch: "Psych-Talk's director has created a new theory and model of personality that explains why we act the way we do."

### THE ROAD

[www.theroad.com.hk](http://www.theroad.com.hk)

Specialty: "Coping with life's problems and pain." Qualifications: Hong Kong-based Alec Gore is a "Certified Practitioner of Neuro-Linguistic Programming." Pitch: "We are all traveling on a journey through life....Like any road, it has its ups and downs, twists and turns, potholes and obstructions."



# incredibly USEFULsites™

## SAY "I LOVE YOU" IN EVERY LANGUAGE

OK, it doesn't tell you how to change your Learjet's oil, or how to tap into a source that can get you everything on the planet for free. In fact, this ultra-plain, non-interactive site does just one thing: it lists every possible way in the world to say "I love you," from the Afrikaans "Ek het jou lief" to "Tom ho' ichema" in native Zuni. The way the world is these days, with many of us getting sucked into all this electronic and digital stuff and taking our significant others for granted—and on the off chance



that gorgeous flight attendant from Tunisia gives you a second glance—this might be one of the most useful (and the nicest) sites on the Web.  
[www.public.iastate.edu/~abalce/love.html](http://www.public.iastate.edu/~abalce/love.html)



## FIND THE CLOSEST WATER PARK

Summer is coming, and you want to cool off. Water sounds good. Water combined with an amusement-park ride sounds better. Screaming your lungs out while you plunge a hundred feet down and having a wall of water splash all over you and your street clothes somehow—oddly—sounds like the thing to do. This site helps you find the water-park vacation spot for your family. You can search by park name (only member parks are listed), state, city, even country—and when you click on the splash palace of your choice, you get all the data you need: dates and hours of operation, cost, food/beverage/alcohol policy, directions, and a description of what you will find in the way of watery features. Some sites even offer a downloadable discount coupon.  
[www.waterparks.com](http://www.waterparks.com)

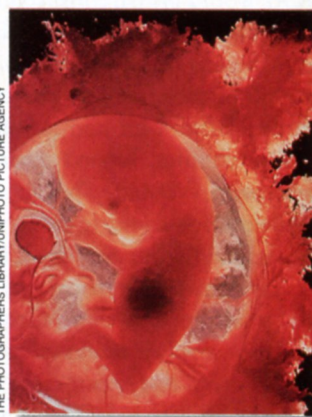
## SNAG A SCREENPLAY

Used to be everyone wanted to write the Great American Novel; now it's the Acceptable Six-Figure Screenplay. And the only way to know how they are supposed to be written is to read some (or, judging by the quality of what's out there, just one). So, do lunch at Drew's Scripts-O-Rama, your index to just about every screenplay and teleplay out there on the Web, both original scripts and verbatim transcripts. It has *Star Wars* (the first four drafts), *It's A Wonderful Life*, *2001*, and *Annie Hall*—Drew's list is voluminous, impressive, and like a year in film school but without the tuition and pretentiousness.  
[home.cdsnet.net/~nikko11/scripts.htm](http://home.cdsnet.net/~nikko11/scripts.htm)

## BEAUTIFY YOUR WEB PAGE

So you're putting together your Web page and you want it to have neat stuff to look at, not just your manifesto and your cat's resumé. But you can't draw, and you don't have a scanner. Well, try this site. We're talking hundreds of illustrations here, available free for the downloading (read the disclaimer carefully), courtesy of Randy D. Ralph, who

created a bunch and found the rest: orbs and globes, flags, arrows and pointers, signs and logos, backgrounds and textures, symbols and gizmos, dots and bullets, and lots more. The worst part about this site is the maddening sound file foisted on you while you peruse the home page; it's like being taken hostage by a crazed Lowrey organ salesman. Deep-six the Debussy, and this site is a pure winner.  
[www.iconbazaar.com](http://www.iconbazaar.com)



## RESEARCH FERTILITY PROBLEMS

There are couples who want kids but can't have them, and many of them suffer because they don't know where to turn. Fertilitext is a site that, aside from the services and products it wants to sell, offers some very



## Each month, we gather all the sites we think offer wonderfully practical services

clear, rock-solid information about infertility and what can be done about it, who to turn to (and when), and the inside dope about all those fertility-inducing drugs with names that sound like power sources on Federation starships. There are links, a place to ask your specific personal question of an experienced nurse or doctor on the Fertilitext staff, and news of the latest developments in the field of baby-making.

[www.fertilitext.org](http://www.fertilitext.org)

### MOVE CROSS-COUNTRY WITH EASE

Virtual Relocation is like having a skilled, experienced advisor to help you with all the tough things you need to do and know about moving. Here it is all broken down into general

areas, including Building and Construction, Career and Education, Mortgage, Real Estate, Insurance, Economic Development, Government, Movers and Storage, Travel and Recreation, Parenting Resources, Relocation, and Professional Resources. Within these categories you can find lenders and lawyers, jobs and day-care centers, tax rates and places to buy or rent—all in your new location. It has a good search function, and if it isn't the end-all and be-all, it is a terrific start.

[www.virtualrelocation.com/state.html](http://www.virtualrelocation.com/state.html)

### DECORATE YOUR WINDOWS

No Brainer Blinds & Shades is a commercial site—the folks who run it want to sell you (can you guess?) blinds and shades via Internet direct sales, and just about everything is geared to that end. But the savvy *YIL* Usefuls peruser can find lots of good info in the Free and Useful Information area that can be applied to any purchase of any blind or shade bought from anybody anywhere: how to measure your window for blinds and shades, how to install them (with QuickTime videos illustrating the process), as well as a chart



showing the comparative insulating capabilities of the various window coverings. This is your window of opportunity—no pane, no gain.

[www.nobrainierblinds.com/useful.html](http://www.nobrainierblinds.com/useful.html)

### SEE HOW THE WORLD MARKS TIME

Got a date? Want one? Janice, proprietor of CalendarLand, can help. No, she is not an escort service—this is just the best place to find the most, and most useful, calendars and diurnal paraphernalia on the Web. There are celestial and religious calendars, calendar software, discussions about the millennium and calendar reform (not as sexy as campaign contribution reform, but still interesting in that there are folks out there who want to replace the current Gregorian with other 12- and even

13-month date-keepers). A nice, thorough site for day-trippers and lunar cyclists.

[www.juneau.com/home/janice/calendarland/](http://www.juneau.com/home/janice/calendarland/)

### LEARN TO TIE TIES AND SCARVES

If you don't know a half Windsor from a full nelson, a four-in-hand from two-in-the-bush, or an ascot from a hacking knot, stick your neck out and try this site, which is a segment of the



larger Fashion Mall. Study the clear illustrations, follow the crisp descriptions, and voilà! Cravat's all, folks.

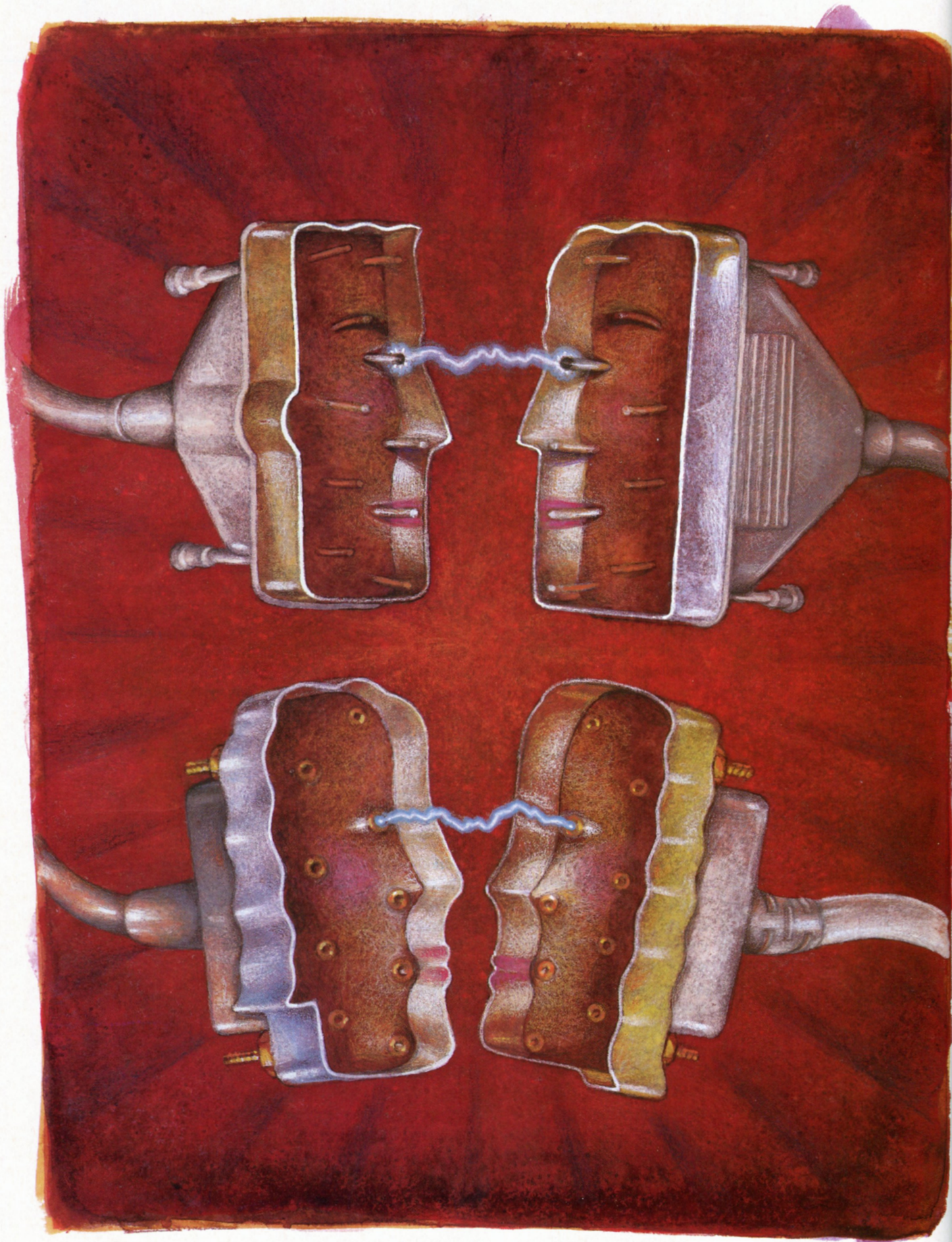
[www.fashionmall.com/media/mr/doc/howtotie.htm](http://www.fashionmall.com/media/mr/doc/howtotie.htm)

Send us news of your useful find! Write: [useful@zd.com](mailto:useful@zd.com).



TRACIVITORY STONE







## Never mind geeks: Gays and lesbians were among the earliest Net pioneers, creating an online community that nurtures and endures

**I**n a West Virginia hamlet—population 3,000—few people have visited San Francisco's gay mecca, Castro Street. But one resident visits it every week. For several years, Becky, age 18, had known she was different—a difference she couldn't discuss with her family or teachers, given the hostility that might greet her in her small Appalachian foothills hometown. In another era, Becky might have buried her feelings in a misbegotten marriage, contemplated suicide, or simply boarded the bus to the nearest big city. Instead she logged on, and started to discover herself at 9600 baud.

A few (key)strokes of cyber-serendipity ([www.dq.org](http://www.dq.org), to be precise) put Becky in contact with Scott Walton, a 43-year-old gay man at **Digital Queers**, a San Francisco-based group helping gay groups master computer technology. "Her first question was, 'How can I become an online activist?'" Walton recalls. Her e-mail said she had created a support group of a few friends in her living room—did he know where they could find others? "I grew up in Columbus, Ohio, feeling

whose members effectively raise themselves alone and isolated, often, like Becky, searching for support. "The great weapon of those who would discriminate against us is shame, fed by our isolation," says Quirk, founder and now president of AOL's gay forum, *onQ*. "Technology offers a real sense of family to many of us who were isolated."

Small wonder gay folks adopted cyberspace early and eagerly. In the early 90s, modems poked along at 1200 baud, and the letters "http://www" meant nothing more than a dismal "Scrabble" hand. Yet even then, the newsgroups *soc.motss* and *alt.sex.motss*—"motss" is Usenet's discreet acronym for "members of the same sex"—were often ranked in the top 10 by number of users among the thousands of newsgroups. Were we just a congenitally chatty bunch, or was something up in cyberspace?

Betting on the latter, in 1991 a 22-year-old student named Ron Buckmire launched the **Queer Resources Directory** (QRD), the first serious online archive of gay-related information—covering history, religion, AIDS, politics, crime, spirituality,

# The Gay Connection

alone in a town of 500,000. Now she's in a town of 3,000 and making connections. I could offer all this personal help anonymously, to connect her to nearby local resources, just because she came knocking on my computer door. That's why this technology is so great for young gays and lesbians."

Young and old alike, gay men and lesbians have come out in this medium—long before Ellen DeGeneres did so on TV—in numberless chat rooms, newsgroups and Web pages. As a young gay man discovering online community through my modem in the 1980s, I would never have dreamed that today, young and old, gay men and lesbians would be coming out so avidly with this medium. "We grabbed this technology because it allowed connections you couldn't get elsewhere," says Michelle Quirk, a longtime cyber-activist. Her story began in North Carolina: "I found myself calling all the time long-distance to New York, the only lesbian bulletin board service I knew." In those early bulletin boards, she saw "a strong network for gay people, providing safety, privacy, and a way to avoid homophobia—our version of the Southern Baptist church community network." The Net offers particular hope for a community

national and international organizations, and the inescapable attacks by the religiously Far Righteous. "So much of the information available on us was wrong or biased. Since the Internet's main purpose is to disseminate information, QRD seemed a perfect way to distribute accurate, unbiased information. The beauty of the Net is that information is treated equally, with no stigma attached to it. A lot of people don't want others to get any truth about homosexuality, but the more people know the truth about us, the better." His original QRD now logs 20,000 hits per day and its 165MB archive is mirrored on five sites around the world.

Much has happened since 1991. For one, the label "gay" has evolved into the more politically inclusive—if alphabetically unfortunate—"l/g/b/t," as bisexuals and transgendered folks joined the party. They have created more than 35 newsgroups, from *alt.lesbian.feminist.poetry* to *yale.queers*. Yahoo!'s own vast **l/g/b/t/ index** now offers links to some 4,000 sites. Type the "g" and "l" words into a search engine like Infoseek and you may get more than a million hits. Yahoo! Webmeister Eric Haeberli explains: "Gay, lesbian, bi, and transgender people are driven more online because many times it's a

B Y D A V I D N I M M O N S  
I L L U S T R A T I O N B Y G R E G C O U C H



# A Quilt of Helpful AIDS Sites

**F**OR MILLIONS OF PEOPLE FACING HIV AND those who love them, the Web is an essential tool in the fight against the virus. For the uninfected, there is a wealth of information and ratings on condoms, safer sex, novel HIV prevention strategies, and harm-reduction information. For those living with HIV, cyber-activists are increasingly saying, "Don't get terminal, get to a terminal."

Now, from the privacy of home, people can learn anonymously about the latest drug news and the pros and cons of the latest treatment strategies, find nearby clinical trials, locate local nutrition and holistic healing resources, and swap stories about the newest HIV drug combinations. This often means people have more information than their physicians, especially in areas with few HIV specialists. "People shouldn't be intimidated by online research," says Matthew Sharp, a 10-year HIV survivor and now director of the Healing Alternatives Foundation. "Given the huge amount of information out there, it's the quickest, easiest way to find out the most current facts. You can find exactly what you're looking for, from behavior to alternative treatments."

For some with HIV, though, the Web brings frustration: they learn about promising drugs or protocols only to find they are not yet approved or available in their country. Scott, a 32-year-old HIV-positive therapist in Sydney, Australia, sums it up: "You can't imagine what it is [like], knowing you need drugs that you can't get. If I lived in Seattle, not Sydney, I could be taking them now."

Of course, there is another downside to all this free information. In the alphabet soup that is AIDS-HIV, PWAs, OIs, ddC, d4-T, one does well to remember one other acronym: GIGO, garbage-in-garbage-out, a symptom of the Web's open access. Any shyster touting the latest quack AIDS "cure" can throw up a shiny new Web page and compete in the global AIDS bazaar alongside proven lifesaving treatments for opportunistic infections. With one's life at stake, a double dose of common sense and caution ought to be built into every search engine. Since they aren't, seasoned cybersearchers suggest that you will do best to develop a diverse range of consistently reputable sources—then stick with them.

To help you get started, here are some of the best HIV resources, culled from HIV-positive people along with academic and community experts from all over.

## INDEX OF ON-LINE AIDS INFORMATION RESOURCES

[www.critpath.org/aric/pwarg-08.htm](http://www.critpath.org/aric/pwarg-08.htm)  
A one-stop shop, a very helpful resource on HIV research.

## EMORY UNIVERSITY'S MEDWEB HIV & AIDS SITE

[www.gen.emory.edu/medweb/medweb.aids.html](http://www.gen.emory.edu/medweb/medweb.aids.html)  
A huge, helpful, and extensive collection worth the time it takes to browse.

## AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE AIDSLINK

[www.aaas.org/science/aidslink.htm](http://www.aaas.org/science/aidslink.htm)  
Covers everything from AIDS activists/advocates and basic research to conferences and clinical trials. Has a significant list of international and regional resources. Useful site for individuals, organizations, and activists.

## PROJECT INFORM

[www.projinf.org](http://www.projinf.org)  
An absolute must-see, this community group has long provided exhaustive information about treatment options.

## AIDS TREATMENT NEWS

[www.aidsnews.org/atnid2.html](http://www.aidsnews.org/atnid2.html)  
This site offers a wide range of information about treatment options—in many different languages.

## AIDS RESOURCE LIST

[www.teleport.com/~celinec/aids.shtml](http://www.teleport.com/~celinec/aids.shtml)  
A thoughtful, terrific mix of community groups, prevention, and treatment resources. Has rural and international links. Pick up a red ribbon GIF here.

## TREATMENT ACTION GROUP

[www.thebody.com/tag/tagpage.html](http://www.thebody.com/tag/tagpage.html)  
A wealth of facts and smart analysis of drug treatment options.

## GAY MEN'S HEALTH CRISIS

[www.gmhc.org](http://www.gmhc.org)  
The nation's first and largest AIDS organization. Worth a look for everything from prevention and treatment to policy issues.

## RURAL CENTER FOR AIDS/STD PREVENTION: INDIANA U & PURDUE

[www.indiana.edu/~aids/](http://www.indiana.edu/~aids/)  
Not all the action is in AIDS epicenter cities, and this good resource site proves it.

## GAY MEN FIGHTING AIDS

[www.users.dircon.co.uk/~eking/gmfa.htm](http://www.users.dircon.co.uk/~eking/gmfa.htm)  
Direct from London, there's always something smart and interesting going on here in community-based prevention.

## THE YAHOO! PAGE ON AIDS

[www.yahoo.com/Health/Diseases\\_and\\_Conditions/AIDS\\_HIV/](http://www.yahoo.com/Health/Diseases_and_Conditions/AIDS_HIV/)  
By the time you get through the vast resources here, there will be a cure. A great place to start.

## SAFER SEX PAGE

[safersex.org](http://safersex.org)  
A lighthearted, good-spirited site that is full of lifesaving information.

## CENTER FOR AIDS PREVENTION STUDIES (University of California SF)

[www.caps.ucsf.edu/capsweb/](http://www.caps.ucsf.edu/capsweb/)  
Don't miss this resource for HIV prevention facts and strategies, and information on programs around the world.

## CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL NATIONAL AIDS CLEARINGHOUSE

[www.cdcnac.org](http://www.cdcnac.org)  
Maybe the federal government isn't so bad, after all. A useful information resource for statistics, prevention materials, and information on trials.

## COMMUNITY PRESCRIPTION SERVICE

[www.prescript.com](http://www.prescript.com)  
What you buy at the pharmacy is nobody's business. Purchasing HIV-related medications through the Web keeps it that way. This is one site that offers a wide range of medicines for HIV and related illnesses.



matter of survival—especially for those living outside urban areas or in less tolerant countries.”

James Fitch, formerly an editor at Lycos and author of *Out's Gay and Lesbian Guide to the Web* (Lycos Press, 1997) agrees. “Anonymity probably drew gays and lesbians to the Web. Before, gay people had to find a gay and lesbian bookstore or bar mag, if there was one, or stand before that ‘queer’ bookshelf in a mainstream bookstore. In rural communities, people had no way to find others who shared their concerns. Now you can be in touch anonymously. You don’t have to use your real name, stand in a dark, sleazy bar, have alcohol or drugs involved. Now people can have intelligent conversations, discuss their issues, access news—it’s just pure communication. That has created a real, thriving community, in a big way.”

That thriving gay Web presence may be explained in part by recent findings from Simmons Research: a whopping 62 percent of lesbian and gay people own a computer, and more than half are online—mostly talking to each other. Comparing that Web presence

with that of the “religious right,” a Web researcher recently concluded: “The l/g/b/t online presence blows them away.” [Of course, some suggest we have an unfair edge, as surveys also show we are more likely a) to be able to type, and b) to have opposable thumbs.]

Gay folks took to cyberspace particularly easily in part because *we have lived in a virtual community for years*. When your world is hidden from view in the visible public culture, “logging on” to see what’s up is nothing new. Moving it online was the *easy* part. For decades, sexual orientation has functioned as its own sort of log-on password to our virtual community. From Waikiki to Walla Walla, the establishments lesbians and gay men have built share more cultural features with each other than they do with the towns where they are situated. We know how to work a gay gym, piano lounge, or cruising spot equally well in Des Moines, Dallas, Down Under, or at the Dinah Shore. Like the magic wardrobe in *Chronicles of Narnia*, these venues are cultural portals, opening to a wider world where you can belong, one that transcends geography and local culture.

We also understood that in our virtual world, as in the cyber one, tribe trumps territory: *what* you are matters far more than *where* you are. When gay everyman travels America, he can step into any midsize city and within an hour connect to community. It starts on the plane, when he chats up the gay flight attendant, who gives him a seat upgrade, free drink, and his phone number. He steps off the plane, calls the local gay switchboard, and finds a community bar or club. He learns if there’s a gay hotel or B&B, may call the local gay church, looks for a gay doctor, and soon has entree to a ready-made circle of

acquaintances. In this world, as online, signs and shibboleths help us find, communicate, and connect with one another. “Got the time, buddy?” and “Excuse me, how do you spell Navratilova?” are the off-line equivalents of the :- ) emoticon. Best of all, in our real-world, off-line virtual community, you can gain access from anywhere, 24 hours a day—without reading a single letter from Steve Case.

On that subject, over at “the world’s largest online service,” guess which is the single largest information provider? Yep, their gay forum area, *onQ*, logging six million hits monthly. In one day alone, users log 8,000 hours there; this month, more than 200,000 hours, up 38 percent since September

1996. This is one case in which size *does* matter. Not only is it the largest known bloc of AOL members—dwarfing providers such as *The New York Times* and *Newsweek*—such numbers also make it the largest concentration of gay folks *anywhere*, if you don’t count the Catholic priesthood. As founder Quirk notes, “No city anywhere on the planet has more gay people than will visit *onQ* this month.”

(It may also be the planet’s largest safer-sex program: with so many hours online, who has time for sex?) Nor are all those visits just one-night cyberstands: *onQ* also boasts AOL’s highest one-year member retention rate. Compared to their homosexually challenged AOL peers, lesbian users prefer more serial (port) monogamy.\*

When it comes to other services, AOL coyly claims ignorance about who is using all those chat rooms. But user surveys suggest that about 20 percent of AOL’s member rooms bear those telltale “m4m” and “f4f” designators—the equivalent of a chat room wearing a “Nobody Knows I’m Gay” T-shirt. Now, if anyone can explain to me just who’s in those scores of “Str8guysm4m” rooms, I’d appreciate it.

On the Web, most gay/lesbian groups worth their rainbow flags have a Web page or 10. From **Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays** to the **National Lesbian and Gay Task Force**, groups are making extensive use of the Web for everything from online transgender support groups to legislative strategy to advice on safety, sex, and coming out. Looking for your nearest community center? Try the **National Directory of Lesbian and Gay Community Centers**. Wanna meet Mr. Right? Go to **Gay.Net**. Looking to stop shaving and drop out? Then commune with the Radical Faeries at **Persimmon’s Radical Faeries Home Page**. If you can’t live without your daily dose of gay news, try **OutBox**. Lesbian parents in need of support (is that redundant, or what?) might try the **LesBiGay Parenting HomePage**. Those pursuing gay spirituality can meditate on **Gay Men’s Spirituality Home Page**, and those who like their sex rough might stop at **Gay Male S/M Activists**, a site that gives

*continued on page 103*

WILLIAM MOSGROVE (2)



Left: Author James Fitch. Right: Cyber-activist Michelle Quirk.

\*It may also be the world’s largest closet: “AOL still won’t feature the forum in any print ads or publications,” she adds. “They’ve never once promo’d it in print ads, marketing campaigns, or included us on the demo screens in TV ads.”



# Site- reviews

Each month we send experts in various fields to seek out the best the Web has to offer. But first, a quick look at what's hot this month.

## new notable & fun!

### SEE. HEAR

**COUNTRYSONG.COM.** Charts, chat, concert schedules, recording news, and even some audio tracks.  
[www.countrySong.com](http://www.countrySong.com)

**THE SEEING EAR THEATRE.** Radio serials: both original radio pieces and classic shows from the Golden Age of Radio.  
[www.scifi.com/pulp/set/](http://www.scifi.com/pulp/set/)

### NET.PLAY

**ENGAGE.** Multiplayer gaming service that features pay-as-you-play pricing. Stay tuned for our review of game nets next month.  
[engagegames.com](http://engagegames.com)

**BIGSHOT.** Wanna be a starlet? Play Tri-Star's Shockwave game about making it big in Hollywood.  
[www.spe.sony.com/Pictures/tv/bigshot/index.html](http://www.spe.sony.com/Pictures/tv/bigshot/index.html)

**THE GAP.** Dress up the dolls in tees and jeans. Khaki-a-go-go.  
[www.gap.com/gapstyle/doll.html](http://www.gap.com/gapstyle/doll.html)

### JUST.OUT.OF.PRINT

**ALT.CULTURE.** Updates to accompany the eponymous book coauthored by *YIL* columnist Nathaniel Wice.  
[www.altculture.com](http://www.altculture.com)

**ROBBREPORT.** "The magazine for the affluent lifestyle" has gone online, making it possible for everyone to pretend that they have money and class.  
[www.robreport.com](http://www.robreport.com)

**BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS.** More than 1,000 home-improvement tips, a parenting guide, plus a friendly design.  
[www.betterhomesandgardens.com](http://www.betterhomesandgardens.com)

### MISC.NEAT

**GETTING REAL.** Follows nine college-bound teens while also imparting useful real-world information for teeny-boppers.  
[www.gettingreal.com](http://www.gettingreal.com)



Getting Real bills itself as "the amazing all-in-one research tool for your life."

**ADONE.** Classifieds for people who need things: jobs, houses, cars....  
[www.adone.com](http://www.adone.com)

**<BOLDTYPE>.** Hep new lit e-zine featuring author interviews and excerpts.  
[www.boldtype.com](http://www.boldtype.com)

**INVENTION MANAGEMENT ON-LINE.** Get a patent, make a million. Resources and a step-by-step program.  
[www.adlenterprises.com/default.htm](http://www.adlenterprises.com/default.htm)

**REVERIES.** Revenues, reviews, revelations, revisions, and revues for marketing types.  
[www.reveries.com](http://www.reveries.com)

**MAXIMA NEW MEDIA.** CD-ROM developers who specialize in new forms for old—and unusual—content. Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense* and a Multimedia Study of Jewish History are examples of the pieces presented here.  
[www.maxnm.com](http://www.maxnm.com)

**APRILFOOLS.COM.** Serves up year-round tomfoolery, such as snail-mailing fake



vacation postcards to your friends.  
[www.aprilfools.com](http://www.aprilfools.com)

**SPORTS CELEBRITY NETWORK.** For the multi-sport enthusiast. Just add remote control and couch.

[www.sportspin.com](http://www.sportspin.com)

**THE STATION.** "Wheel of Fortune," "Jeopardy," and more. Caution: long load time.

[www.station.sony.com](http://www.station.sony.com)

**CHANNEL A.** See the Asian community, both here and abroad, through Western eyes.

[www.channela.com](http://www.channela.com)

**AARDVARK PET SUPPLIES.** The unusual and the mundane in pet supplies.

[www.aardvarkpet.com](http://www.aardvarkpet.com)

**FODOR'S TRAVEL SHOW.** Hits the band-width and the airwaves for a two-hour program on weekends.

[www.fodors.com/radio](http://www.fodors.com/radio)

**WACKY.COM.** Kinda tired humor, but the Net A Sketch is neat.

[wacky.com](http://wacky.com)



Everything old is new again: don't miss the groovy Net A Sketch at Wacky.com.

**GOCOLLEGE.** A search engine designed for high school students researching potential colleges and universities based on location, scores, tuition, and more.

[www.gocollege.com](http://www.gocollege.com)

**HEBREW IMMIGRANT AID SOCIETY** aids refugees by helping them resettle.

[www.hias.org](http://www.hias.org)

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### This Month's Contributors

Derek A. Baker, Bonnie J. Burton, Richard Butner, Dean Foust, David Haskin, Lisa Kempster, Grace Lichtenstein, Barbara Moffat, Marc Swartzbaugh, Tom Watson



# Wine

by Jamie Wolff

GUEST REVIEW



JEFF WEINER

A little patience will get you plenty of first-class information on all aspects of wine, from growing (grapes), producing, aging, buying, and storing to drinking, says our expert, who stepped out of Christie's cellar long enough to give us a tour of the wired wine world.

## THE BEST ★★★★★

**ROBIN GARR'S WINE LOVERS' PAGE** is a great starting point for exploring wine online. Garr is a long-established wine writer and critic who is also very wired (he's the sysop for CompuServe's Bacchus Wine Forum). Garr produces this well-designed page of extensive tasting notes with an emphasis on good-value wines. He writes well and tastes widely, so this is a great source for finding a new wine. Don't forget to check in with the opinionated wine lovers in the active discussion group here, and if you need more guidance, drop Garr a line; he tries to answer

e-mail within 24 hours. The site also provides extensive links to other good, interesting, and just plain curious sites, a wine shopping list, and recommendations for wine books.

[www.iglou.com/why/wine.html](http://www.iglou.com/why/wine.html) ★★★★★

Apparently, the opening of a McDonalds in Rome's ancient city center was the last straw for Carlo Petrini. So in 1986, he founded the International Slow Food Movement

"under the symbol of the snail to reaffirm the dignity of the culture of food." The

## **SLOW FOOD GUIDE TO THE WINES OF THE WORLD**

has an international staff of contributors and offers detailed reviews of more than 2,000 wineries in 30 countries. Who knew that a champagne was made in India—much less an apparently pretty decent champagne! Still, the coverage doesn't pretend to be comprehensive; instead, the wineries chosen seem to fit the careful craft and artisanal quality that the

Slow Foodies promote. The French selection (overseen by the highly esteemed Michelle Bettane, among others) and the California collections both look good. Don't miss this one!

[www.veronafiere.it/slowines](http://www.veronafiere.it/slowines) ★★★★★

## THE REST ★★★★★

**THE WINE SPECTATOR's** site is only a few months old, but even if you don't savor the magazine, you will probably agree that this site is already both indispensable and unavoidable. Even

in its infancy it is continually updated, improved, and expanded. You can search more than 15,000 wine reviews (55,000, if you are willing to pay \$30/year) that include ratings and prices, browse back issues, and get information on food-wine pairings or the magazine's extensive restaurant reviews. The chat rooms are designed to encourage participation from all levels of wine lovers, so it is easy to find the right place to ask what Merlot is or to get a second (and probably third and fourth) opinion about whether or not you should decant the '61 Bonnes Mares. Pet peeves: the long first-time sign-on survey is irritating, and we wanted more info about the suggested retailers.

[www.winespectator.com](http://www.winespectator.com) ★★★★★



MOLTENIMAGE BANK

The **SMART WINE** page is another gold mine of wine info, especially thanks to an extensive links page. Produced by the publisher of various wine trade mags (*Wine Business Insider*, *Wine Business Monthly*, and *Smart Wine Magazine*), it is a good source of wine business news as well as a lot of basic consumer services: tasting notes, FAQs, discussion groups, and an interesting section called Vintage Watch, where readers share their experiences in tracking the drinking trajectories of their older wines.

[smartwine.com](http://smartwine.com) ★★★★★



We will definitely be regular visitors to **THE WINE PAGE**, which fashions itself as everyman's guide to wine. Highlights here include an interesting section of tasting notes culled mostly from Use-net (rec.food.drink and alt.food.wine), to which readers are encouraged to contribute; The Cellar, an extensive FAQ page with glossaries, vintage charts, and answers to common questions; and the infamous and worthy "Rate Robert Parker" page, in which the drinking public gets to match taste buds and wits with the wine world's most noted critic. (Not very surprisingly, Parker survives the ordeal pretty well: his rating, when we looked, was 86.)

[www.speakeasy.org/~winepage](http://www.speakeasy.org/~winepage) ★★★★★

There are a large number of Web sites produced by individuals who just want to share their wine experiences with the rest of us. **JOHN GILMAN**, who works in wine retail in New York City, has a great site geared toward experienced tasters. Gilman tastes a large number of rare, old, interesting wines, and he writes well, has knowledge and confidence, and (the ultimate recommendation for me) he is a Burgundy fanatic. [www.aoweb.com/jgilman/index.shtml](http://www.aoweb.com/jgilman/index.shtml) ★★★★★

**MARK SQUIRES** is another wine lover (and moderator of Prodigy's wine, beer, and spirits board) who wants to share his tasting notes, and he does a good job of keeping things lively. He certainly seems to be on a tasting circuit that lands him in a lot of enviable situations, and he has broad-based taste. Notable sections here: Quick Picks/Hot Wines and Best Buys. Beware large photos that can take a

while to download. Overall, this site is well worth checking out.

[pages.prodigy.com/squires/marksq.htm](http://pages.prodigy.com/squires/marksq.htm)

★★★★☆

Interested in learning more about Port? Visit **KEITH GABRYELSKI's** site,

which is really an online book on the subject, offering thorough information on Port production and history.

[www.wildfire.com/](http://www.wildfire.com/)

~ag/portwine ★★★★★

**WINE-X** magazine is now online and positioning itself as the medium to get the message across to Gen-X that they are missing out on some of life's best if they are only drinking beer. An excellent message and an

admirable combination of solid wine information and general informality. Funny and refreshing.

[www.winery.com](http://www.winery.com) ★★★★★

Burgundy fanatic **JACOB "YAK" SHAYA** has an amusing and vivacious page that will bring you up to date with his serious search for great wine and food. It is fun to read, sometimes even mouth-watering.

[homepage.interaccess.com/~pduffy/](http://homepage.interaccess.com/~pduffy/)

yakshaya/ ★★★★★

Anyone lucky enough to be planning a trip to Bordeaux should see the **FOOD AND WINE OF FRANCE** page. The wine material is very basic, but what is really worthwhile here is the compilation of hotel and restaurant info for the region, which would take a pile of guidebooks to duplicate. The site also offers visual/video tours of some châteaux.

[www.bordeaux.com](http://www.bordeaux.com) ★★★★★

*Jamie Wolff is a wine specialist at Christie's wine department in New York.*



HARTIMAGE BANK

## A LINK TOO FAR...

A group in Utah called Summum has formed a kind of wine-based religious sect, and the site promotes its "nectars" and its publications. No ordinary equipment will do for its productions, either: its wines are "born" in a large pyramid. Hmm.

[www.summum.org/nectars/nectar.htm](http://www.summum.org/nectars/nectar.htm)

## BUYING ONLINE

*Retailing wine online is still in its infancy, and some sites are not always updated. Interstate shipping of wine involves an insane number of conflicting local laws, and thus isn't always available. Some promising places to look are as follows:*

**Chicago Wine Company.** A retailer and wine auction company that publishes its entire auction catalog online. Like any other auction situation, you need to shop carefully, but it is interesting to see their offerings. There are also some good wines in the retail section.

[www.tcwc.com](http://www.tcwc.com)

**Duke of Bourbon.** A Los Angeles-area shop with a great selection of California wines.

[www.dukeofbourbon.com](http://www.dukeofbourbon.com)

**The Wine Exchange.** Orange, California, shop with a large and imaginative selection of wine from Europe and the U.S.

[www.winex.com](http://www.winex.com)

**Premier Cru.** Oakland, California—Ditto above!

[www.premier-cru.com](http://www.premier-cru.com)

**Virtual Vineyards.** Seek your vine online.

[www.virtualvin.com](http://www.virtualvin.com)

The glass from which you drink your wine *does* matter! There are lots of excellent glasses out there, but Riedel is the favorite of many in the business. The best prices we've seen online for these outrageous beauties (and we've seen some that were outrageously expensive) are at **Wine Stuff**.

[www.wineglasses.com](http://www.wineglasses.com)



# Getting Hitched

## THE BEST ★★★★★

Who needs Vegas? **THEE WEB** is your virtual chapel for quickie weddings. It is one-stop shopping for the entire event: full planning and execution online. Pop the question, invite guests—even select

It is no secret that weddings are stressful. But the Web is brimming with enough homespun advice, nuptial humor, and first-person tales of wedding woes to make even the most stressed-out brides and grooms crack a smile. Anointing a “wedding of the week” may seem sappy, but the newlyweds behind **WAY COOL**

**WEDDINGS** make up for it with the Giggles section. Don't miss the horror story about the groom who, uh, “unveiled” his bride's indiscretions at the reception (she was involved with the best man).

[tribeca.ios.com/~whitey/waycool/](http://tribeca.ios.com/~whitey/waycool/) ★★★★★

Everyone says it's *her* day—so **UNGROOM'D** is here to help out the Y-chromosome set with sections such as Mind Over Marriage and The Income's Outcome. Visit here for impassioned advice, wry commentary, and realistic

takes on what it is like to graduate from bachelorhood.

[www.ungroomd.com](http://www.ungroomd.com) ★★★★★

**THE TOWN & COUNTRY WEDDING REGISTRY** makes shopping for the happy couple, well, a piece of cake. Each couple that signs up for the service has a page with a complete listing of shops where they have registered. Select the shop nearest you and two weeks later you will get a printout of all the items still up for grabs. While you're at *T&C*, drop the bride and groom an e-mail message, too.

[tncweddings.com/index.html](http://tncweddings.com/index.html) ★★★★★



music for the ceremony. At the appointed date and time (you choose them), meet your beloved online and be married live in a chat session. Voilà! You're virtually hitched! Need more inspiration? Read the transcript of the first legal, two-proxy ceremony in cyberspace (both the bride and groom were absent), which took place last winter at the **GLAMORAMA WEDDING CHAPEL**. Virtual vows were exchanged in a chat room, and the transcript is posted online to prove it.

[hollywoodandvine.com/ltheeweb/index.html](http://hollywoodandvine.com/ltheeweb/index.html)

★★★★★

[www.glamorama.com/wed/](http://www.glamorama.com/wed/) ★★★★★

## THE REST ★★★★★

Newlyweds Aaron Denney and Lia Jung can't decide what to call themselves (neither “Lia Denney” nor “Aaron Jung” sound quite right). So this nameless pair created **NAME THAT COUPLE** to find a new last name. Submit one and you are automatically entered to win a bottle of 1989 Schramsburg champagne.

[users.ccnet.com/~aaron/name/index.html](http://users.ccnet.com/~aaron/name/index.html)

★★★★★

Whether or not you are incorporating traditional elements of Africa into your wedding, the **AFRICAN WEDDING GUIDE** is a must-see. Read up on customs such as jumping the broom, find out why the best man is historically a “warrior,” and listen to an audio file of the Lord's Prayer in Ki-Swahili. Beautiful Nigerian-made gowns are for sale, too.

[www.melanet.com/wedding/](http://www.melanet.com/wedding/) ★★★★★

The big-league wedding experts at **TODAY'S BRIDE** magazine are online with a discussion area, bridal consultant, and state-by-state listings of bridal shows and events. Don't miss the monthly promotions—they can make affording your honeymoon a whole lot easier.

[www.todaysbride.com](http://www.todaysbride.com) ★★★★★

The best man will appreciate insider tips on raising a glass in Toast Points at **WEDDINGBELLS**. It includes a list of classic toasts for “those at a loss for words.”

[www.weddingbells.com](http://www.weddingbells.com) ★★★★★

—B.M.

## WHY ARE WE DOING THIS AGAIN, HONEY?

Where did all these **WEDDING TRADITIONS** originate, anyway? Tying shoes to the bumper? The phrase “tying the knot”?

[www.halcyon.com/mganson/traditions.html](http://www.halcyon.com/mganson/traditions.html)

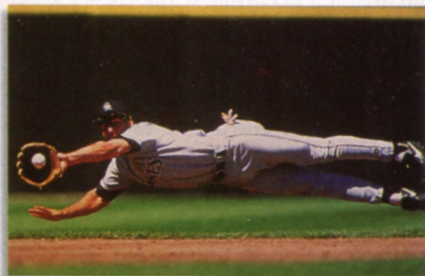
Go beyond the four Cs (color, cut, clarity, and cost) with **DIAMOND CUTTERS'** quick and dirty history of diamonds.

[www.diamondcutters.com/diamondhistory.html](http://www.diamondcutters.com/diamondhistory.html)



# Baseball

## THE BEST ★★★★★



GREVILLE/ALLSPORT

While the mega-sports sites such as ESPN SportsZone and CBS SportsLine set the standard for professional, in-depth coverage with the latest scores, updates, and chats, the single-minded **FASTBALL** raises the bar when it comes to the great American sport by providing all that and more. In addition to grand-slam, wall-to-wall baseball coverage, live updates, and news flashes—all day, all night—it excels at providing plenty of interactive fun for the fans, too. The Foul Pole section asks you to test your trivia muscles by sending in potential members for theme teams such as the All-Fish Team (includes second-baseman Bobby Sturgeon and right-fielder Tim Salmon) and the All-Alcohol team (includes pitcher Johnny Lush and shortstop Bobby Wine). The sentimentalist will love the quote collections from Casey Stengel and Yogi Berra. Another fun highlight is a Shockwave batting game. And, best of all, it is completely free.

[www.fastball.com](http://www.fastball.com) ★★★★★

[espnnet.sportszone.com/mlb/index.html](http://espnnet.sportszone.com/mlb/index.html) ★★★★★

[www.sportsline.com](http://www.sportsline.com) ★★★★★

## THE REST ★★★★★

Dense in coverage, well-written, and well-designed, **THE SPORTING NEWS**

provides the thorough team updates and fan polls one would expect from this venerable print pub. A unique feature of special interest to card collectors is The Fans' Five: a regularly updated list of the top fan-submitted favorite players. There is also an extensive fantasy baseball section.

[sportingnews.com/baseball](http://sportingnews.com/baseball) ★★★★★

If you are a stats hound (and let's face it—most baseball fans are), check out **LEAD DOG STATS**. All you can eat, along with an application that will help you slice 'em the way you like, and it's all free.

[www.leaddogstats.com](http://www.leaddogstats.com) ★★★★★



DANIEL/ALLSPORT

If you take your glove to every game and sit off the first-base line, chances are that someday you will catch a foul ball. But how many people ever catch a homer? If you are among the lucky few with

bragging rights (and no home page of your own), step up with details of your great day and be immortalized in **THE HOME RUN BALL REGISTRY**. Gerhard Peters runs this well-meant and non-commercial site. Don't try to fool him, either: he does his homework.

[home.earthlink.net/~gldfinger](http://home.earthlink.net/~gldfinger) ★★★★★

**BLACK BASEBALL'S NEGRO BASEBALL LEAGUES** recounts the history, the players, and the teams, including recent headlines such as Willie Wells's induction into the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Players from the Negro leagues already in the Hall

are profiled here, as are players the author feels deserve induction.

[www.blackbaseball.com](http://www.blackbaseball.com) ★★★★★

As you would expect, **SPORTS ILLUSTRATED** has solid baseball coverage. Especially impressive is the extensive minor league coverage, from triple A to AA, international, and the independents. We even saw schedules for minor league teams.

[pathfinder.com/si/news/baseball/index.html](http://pathfinder.com/si/news/baseball/index.html) ★★★★★

**USA TODAY'S BASEBALL** page offers free daily coverage that is reliable and solid—if somewhat bare-bones—from its newsstand ink issue, plus coverage from its weekly baseball special edition. Also, it features very frequent updates during games.

[www.usatoday.com/sports/mlb.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/sports/mlb.htm) ★★★★★

**JOHN SKILTON'S BASEBALL LINKS**, "containing 2,484 unique links," dives into 21 different categories, from high school and college pages, baseball chat rooms, and ballparks to audio broadcasting sites. If it's not here....

[www.baseball-links.com](http://www.baseball-links.com) ★★★★★

—M.S.

## INSTANT REPLAY

While most of the sites we looked at have real-time updates of live games, not many provide animated replays of every pitch and play on a backdrop of line-ups and stats. At **Instant Sports**, tracer bullets show the path of the ball. Live coverage usually is available with about a 90-second delay. A complete archive of every game played this year turns your browser into a VCR: you can queue up any game from last year and watch a rerun, complete with stop-frame, fast-forward, and other tape-machine controls.

[www.instantsports.com](http://www.instantsports.com)



# Buying a New Computer

## THE BEST ★★★★★

Bigger, faster, better...that's what the world of computers is all about. If you are after a sleek rocket ship of a PC with the latest features, you need to upgrade fairly frequently. So


D. WAGNON/THE STOCK MARKET

whose opinion do you trust? **PC WORLD ONLINE** wins the award for the most customizable way to find the PC of your dreams. The Interactive Buying Guide asks you for the specs for your next PC, then lists models that meet your needs. The list includes specifics

such as the amount of RAM, hard disk capacity, and price, although it doesn't include links to reviews carried in the magazine or to vendors' Web sites. The reviews usually walk a fine line successfully: they provide sufficient technical details to satisfy enthusiasts, but aren't so bogged down in those details that non-technical users will lose interest. Features and benchmark results are charted within comparative reviews.

[www.pcworld.com](http://www.pcworld.com) ★★★★★

## THE REST ★★★★★

**TECHWEB** is from CMP Publications, which publishes 22 technology-oriented magazines for various kinds of users, ranging from home users to resellers. The search results list includes the first sentence or two of each review, which facilitates finding specific articles. System reviews focus on what the technology will mean to your work, rather than on strict benchmark numbers.

[www.techweb.com](http://www.techweb.com) ★★★★★

## THE NEST

How to review the Web nest of the company that nurtures our very own site? Well, we're not going to give it a star rating, but we invite you to make up your own mind about **ZD NET**. Our reviewer thinks it has the most comprehensive collection of computer reviews on the Web. The site gets its content from Ziff-Davis' computer publications, many of which regularly and comprehensively examine PC and Macintosh systems. You can search the contents of all magazines at once or only the publications you designate. Or, you can visit the Products section, where you will find hardware and software roundup reviews that compare multiple products. The nature of the reviews depends on the magazine from which they are drawn: they can range from non-technical reviews aimed at the average home user to info for propeller-heads. The Company Finder section provides basics such as phone numbers and links to the sites of many vendors. Our only gripe: where are the smaller vendors?

[www.zdnet.com](http://www.zdnet.com)



**Tech Expert**, offered at Your Small Office, is a great resource for product reviews.

Of particular interest for PC buyers at **INFOWORLD ELECTRIC** is the Test Center section, which reviews hardware and software. However, given the magazine's orientation toward information technology professionals, the reviews are technical and aren't aimed at "just folks" looking for their next PC. They focus instead on corporate computing, and there is a lot of information here for technically inclined users.

[www.infoworld.com/pageone/pageone.shtml](http://www.infoworld.com/pageone/pageone.shtml)

★★★★★

**CNET** is the most successful Web-only computer publication, and it carries many product reviews. The reviews tend to focus more on Internet-related products such as browsers, e-mail, and video-conferencing software and hardware than on PCs. Still, we found a number of PC and Macintosh system reviews which include benchmark results, but focus on setup and usability.

[www.cnet.com/Content/Reviews/](http://www.cnet.com/Content/Reviews/) ★★★★★

**YOUR SMALL OFFICE** adds a new hardware and software review from *Home Office Computing* magazine each week and a new buyers' guide comparing products every three to four weeks. The site reviews PCs, peripherals, and all manner of productivity software. The reviews are knowledgeable and quite concise—typically about 300 words—and are aimed at non-technical users. If you use the site's search engine, the results include an abstract for each found article. The focus here is on entrepreneurial issues rather than strictly technological ones; i.e., how much value a specific machine gives for the dollar.

[www.smalloffice.com](http://www.smalloffice.com) ★★★★★

—D.H.



# Encyclopedias

## THE BEST ★★★★★

Using a sample list of topics in history, literature, and science, we checked out a number of online encyclopedias and research services. We found several free sites that would be helpful for a quick look-up, but if you want a one-stop source for in-depth information, you're going to have to pay for it. (All sites charging fees, however, offer free trials.)

**BRITANNICA ONLINE** is pricey (\$15/month, \$150/year), but it gave us more than twice as many useful hits than any other site on each of our research topics, with a search feature that lets you use familiar, natural syntax—you can type in questions such as, "Who was involved in the Black Sox scandal?" Easy to access, well-researched information for researchers of all ages.

[www.eb.com](http://www.eb.com) ★★★★★

**GROLIER MULTIMEDIA ENCYCLOPEDIA ONLINE** (\$60/year, one-time \$5 registration fee) is perhaps most useful for elementary and middle school students who don't have access to Grolier's CD-ROM. We got the fewest hits concerning our sample topics, but each article featured relevant images or maps as well as links to other sites. Also here: a large atlas.

[gme.grolier.com](http://gme.grolier.com) ★★★★★

## THE REST ★★★★★

High school students who want to skip a trek to the library should use the **ELECTRIC LIBRARY** (\$10/month, \$60/year). It is basically a searchable version of the reference and periodical sections of your local public library. It indexes and archives magazine and newspaper articles, several encyclopedias, maps, books,

and television transcripts. The search engine allows you to type a natural language sentence, but power users might be frustrated by the lack of advanced searching features.

[www.elibrary.com](http://www.elibrary.com) ★★★★★

We got a healthy number of hits on our research topics at **COGNITO** (\$10/month, \$90/year), but we would have liked more graphics. Cognito has a handy subject guide along



with keyword searching, and features hundreds of thousands of articles from a variety of sources. Basically on par with Electric Library, but pricier.

[www.cognito.com](http://www.cognito.com) ★★★★★

**RESEARCHPAPER.COM** is useful if you don't know what to research. There is a large collection of topics and ideas for school papers, linked to Electric Library and Infoseek searches. You also can find writing tips or share your research ideas. And it's free.

[www.researchpaper.com](http://www.researchpaper.com) ★★★★★



Reference comes alive with Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia Online.

**FINDOUT** is a reference service designed to steer you to the best information source available (online, books, CD-ROMs, videos, or associations) on a given topic.

[www.findout.com](http://www.findout.com) ★★★★★

**ITOLS!** is an easy-to-use front end to numerous other Web-based search tools: the CIA factbook, various map servers, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, the Bible, and biographical dictionaries. A great place to hunt for just the right tidbit.

[www.itools.com](http://www.itools.com) ★★★★★

The **FREE INTERNET ENCYCLOPEDIA** and the **WORLD-WIDE WEB VIRTUAL LIBRARY** are relatively old (in Web time) and somewhat eclectic grassroots indices to information on the Internet. We found only one site that pertained to our research projects.

[clever.net/cam/encyclopedia.html](http://clever.net/cam/encyclopedia.html) ★★★★★

[www.w3.org/pub/DataSources/bySubject/Overview.html](http://www.w3.org/pub/DataSources/bySubject/Overview.html) ★★★★★

—R.B.

## AND AS LONG AS YOU'RE PAYING...

...you might as well consider the encyclopedias available on the following online information services:

### America Online:

Compton's, Grolier, Columbia Concise

### CompuServe:

Hutchinson, Grolier

### Prodigy:

Compton's



# Keeping Up with New Web Sites

## THE BEST ★★★★★

These days, folks crank out new Web sites faster than McDonalds serves burgers. How can you possibly keep current on fresh spots? **WEBCRAWLER SELECT: NEW SITES THIS WEEK** offers an excellent solution: a weekly "best-of-the-new" page. This directory site does a great job of sifting through the pile of site announcements and highlighting sites worth a visit. The operative word here is *select*: it makes no attempt to be all-inclusive. Its reviews (about 25 per week) are punchy, pointed, and presorted into subjects such as arts, chat, computers, and education. [webcrawler.com/select/nunu.new.html](http://webcrawler.com/select/nunu.new.html) ★★★★★

Prefer to make your own judgments of new sites? The mother of all directories has another approach: list 'em all, every day! **YAHOO!—WHAT'S NEW** provides a reliable daily rundown, by category, of hundreds of new Web sites submitted by their creators, with short descriptions. And for clicking kids, try **WHAT'S NEW ON YAHOO!IGANS!** [Ed. Note: Yes, Yahoo! and this magazine are corporate cousins.] [www.yahoo.com/new/](http://www.yahoo.com/new/) ★★★★★  
[www.yahooigans.com/new/index.html](http://www.yahooigans.com/new/index.html) ★★★★★

## THE REST ★★★★★

Each week, the venerable newsletter **NETSURFER DIGEST** comes ashore with numerous interesting, often quirky sites in a variety of realms. Netsurfer does not rate sites, but does give its readers a good sense of their contents and points

of view. It is available via e-mail, too. [www.netsurf.com/nsd/](http://www.netsurf.com/nsd/) ★★★★★

Lycos' **POINTREVIEW: NEW & NOTEWORTHY** has, in addition to one-phrase descriptions of 25 new sites per week, a weekly essay highlighting a few new sites pegged to specific themes or to current events. One week it might be



Hollywood's Academy Awards; the next it could be Federal Aviation Administration crash data. [point.lycos.com/index.html](http://point.lycos.com/index.html) ★★★★★

For new kid-centric places you might have missed elsewhere, Berit merits a visit. Run by an online librarian who works for a Net publishing company in Nova Scotia, **BERIT'S BEST SITES: WHAT'S NEW** features new sites each month that will appeal to children. Berit carefully observes, describes, and rates each site

on a 1-to-5 scale. Not all the sites reviewed here are new.

[www.cochran.com/theodore/noframe/berit/new.html](http://www.cochran.com/theodore/noframe/berit/new.html) ★★★★★

**THE SCOUT REPORT** is a sturdy, somewhat academic weekly that specializes in "new and newly discovered Internet resources of interest to researchers and educators." Brief but thoughtful reviews of serious stuff appear here, under the imprimaturs of InterNIC and the University of Wisconsin's Computer Science Department. Its latest addition is **K.I.D.S.** (Kids Identifying and Discovering Sites), a monthly set of site choices and descriptions written by students in grades K through 12 in Madison, Wisconsin, and Boulder, Colorado. A great resource, but you are liable to find not-quite-so-new sites.

[wwwscout.cs.wisc.edu/scout/report/current/index.html](http://wwwscout.cs.wisc.edu/scout/report/current/index.html) ★★★★★

[wwwscout.cs.wisc.edu/scout/KIDS/index.html](http://wwwscout.cs.wisc.edu/scout/KIDS/index.html) ★★★★★

**NET HAPPENINGS**, another service of InterNIC, is the original e-mailing list of new sites, founded in 1994. A hefty dose of announcements from site creators about newly minted or recently revamped sites. [www.gi.net:80/NET/](http://www.gi.net:80/NET/) ★★★★★

Try **WHAT'S NEW TOO!** for an unexpurgated, unfiltered list of new sites as described by their creators. URLs are posted, says the management, within 36 hours of receipt.

[newtoo.manifest.com/page1.html](http://newtoo.manifest.com/page1.html) ★★★★★

—G.L.

## HOW TO ANNOUNCE YOUR SITE

Have you developed a new Web site that you would like the wired universe to visit? Step one is to announce it on "comp.infosystems.www.announce"—the Usenet newsgroup set up solely for this purpose. The newsgroup's FAQ explains where and in what format to send notices of new sites. [www.ep.com/faq/webannounce.html](http://www.ep.com/faq/webannounce.html)



# Germany

## THE BEST ★★★★★


LEONARDO STONE

For the hip insider's take on Germany and the Germans, sightseeing, art, and culture, check out **EXPLORING GERMANY**. It has crucial information on all 16 German states and selected cities as well as must-see sights, funky inside tips, maps, and useful travel info about public transportation. Designed by and for young travelers, this is a great place to start planning your trip to Germany. Its fast-loading pictures will help you decide where to go and what to do.

[www.commed.de/germany/home.html](http://www.commed.de/germany/home.html)

★★★★★

The **BAVARIA ALPINE NET GUIDE** is a fantastic compendium of useful information about the most beautiful and most traveled region of Germany and the jewel in its crown: the city of Munich. Book a hotel, see a city map, check out restaurants and clubs—even take a virtual tour of the famous Deutsches Museum. You also

can find out about Munich's most famous event: Oktoberfest. Don't miss the virtual tours of King Ludwig's celebrated castles: Neuschwanstein, Linderhof, and Herrenchiemsee.

[www.bavaria.com](http://www.bavaria.com) ★★★★★

## THE REST ★★★★★

Based on the indispensable book of the same name, **THE GERMAN WAY** will teach you how to travel comfortably through Germany. Learn everything from how to conduct everyday business in the German-speaking world to tips for driving safely on the Autobahn.

[powernet.net/~hfilippo/german](http://powernet.net/~hfilippo/german) ★★★★★

Colonel Craig's **WWW LINKS FOR GERMAN** is a low-tech but meaty site with the most complete set of German-related links out there. A good place to find TV and radio stations, magazines, universities, political groups, travel info, literature, music, and more.

[www.isu.edu/~nickcrai/german.html](http://www.isu.edu/~nickcrai/german.html) ★★★★★

You've seen the castle and the museum, and now you're tired and thirsty. What you need is something that many people come to Germany specifically to experience: beer! Visit **BEER FROM GERMANY** and find out everything you could possibly imagine about drinking and creating some of that magical German brew. Special commendations go to the section

on beer's history and on the German Purity Law that makes German beer what it is. To really work up a thirst, read the Wise Old Beer Sayings.

[www.bier.de/beer.html](http://www.bier.de/beer.html)

★★★★★


CAMERA PRESS LONDON/GLOBE PHOTOS

City.Net **GERMANY** has useful, general travel information, but most interesting are the links to dozens of German cities' home pages.

[city.net/countries/germany/](http://city.net/countries/germany/) ★★☆☆☆

—L.K.

## LOGISTICS

Chances are, if you are flying to Germany, you will land in Frankfurt. The **FRANKFURT AIRPORT** has up-to-the-minute information about all arrivals and departures.

[www.frankfurt-airport.de](http://www.frankfurt-airport.de)

Book any of 600 hotels throughout Germany through the **ABAKA** service. Covers all the major cities and a surprising number of out-of-the-way spots.

[www.abaka.com/Germany/index.html](http://www.abaka.com/Germany/index.html)

**THE RAILSERVER** will help you find a train going your way. This unique service will actually e-mail the results of your timetable query back to you when it comes up with an answer.

[rail.rz.uni-karlsruhe.de/rail/info-trn.html](http://rail.rz.uni-karlsruhe.de/rail/info-trn.html)

## LEARN THE LANGUAGE

**GERMAN FOR BEGINNERS** is an excellent online learning tool with exercises, dictionaries, audio pronunciations, and tests. For inspiration, read along (in German and English) with audio files of Rilke's poetry.

[castle.uvic.ca/german/149/](http://castle.uvic.ca/german/149/)

**Want to practice your German? Try these German-language-only sites.**

**TV TODAY:** Clips from this popular show, radio shows, and a lively online magazine.

[www.TVToday.de/TVTODAY/akt.prog/dbl.akt.prog.html](http://www.TVToday.de/TVTODAY/akt.prog/dbl.akt.prog.html)

**DER SPIEGEL:** Trendy cultural magazine.

[www.spiegel.de](http://www.spiegel.de)

**UEBERSICHTSSEITE:** What's going on in Berlin.

[www.is.in-berlin.de/Service/Local.html](http://www.is.in-berlin.de/Service/Local.html)

**THE WILD-SITE:** Listings of the hottest clubs around the major German cities.

[www.wild-site.de/berlin.html](http://www.wild-site.de/berlin.html)



# Ska

## THE BEST ★★★★★

Ska is that infectious music that is part reggae-with-red-pepper, part punk-on-Prozac. Rudies who like to skank (translation: ska fans who enjoy dancing) should first head for **THE SKA FAQ**. What began as a standard, text-only Q&A for the alt.music.ska newsgroup has grown into the definitive multimedia encyclo-

pedia of all that is ska. You will find animated GIFs of people skanking, sound files, a "family tree" of ska-related musical styles, and a discussion of ska fashion. If you are looking for your favorite ska band, searching for places to hear

ska on the radio, or just checking out the origin of the term "rude bwoy," make sure you visit here first.

[www.twillis.com/ska/faq/](http://www.twillis.com/ska/faq/) ★★★★★

**SKA-TASTROPHE**, a print and Web zine devoted to ska culture, has several good articles on what makes ska "ska" (besides the music): for example, Noah Wildman on ska fashion, how the late-60s-style suits and porkpie hats had their connection to Britain's Mod style...and how it is all now part of ska.

[www.iag.net/~bogner/skatast.html](http://www.iag.net/~bogner/skatast.html) ★★★★★

## THE REST ★★★★★

The **ATTEMPTED SKA PAGE** is a much-loved old-timer (since 1994) in the online ska world; it has a valuable set of

links to other ska sites and some worthwhile information of its own—but it is Webmaster Bill Tanner's history and news of Texas ska bands that keeps his from being just a Lone-Star site. Plus, he's got that ska checkerboard theme working overtime.

[www.nettap.com/~tanner/ska.html](http://www.nettap.com/~tanner/ska.html) ★★★★★

It's "skandalous" how few ska bands get major radio exposure. (It's also pretty appalling how many bad ska puns the genre perpetrates.) To rectify this, the **RUDENET Ska Show** is broadcast over the good ol' Net, for users of RealAudio 3.0. You also will find reviews of ska CDs here.

[www.rudenet.com](http://www.rudenet.com)

★★★★★

One of the nice things about ska is its sense of its own history, a rarity in popular music styles...unless you count the grunge tributes to Neil Young. Yuzo Watanabe hopes to make **RIMSHOT!** the big zine for third-wave ska, with some electronic tips of the porkpie hat to the first and second waves. Right now, his skeletal crew's got some reviews of local shows and albums and a few interesting thoughts on ska.

[www.contrib.andrew.cmu.edu/~yw26/rimshot/](http://www.contrib.andrew.cmu.edu/~yw26/rimshot/) ★★★★★



The Ska FAQ traces the genre back to the Blue Beat label.



**Ska-Tastrophe** features interviews, history, and reviews of Ska bands such as Siren Six.

2-Tone-era, and third-wave ska. The site is also a good introduction to the nuances of musical styles found in ska.

[www.phlab.missouri.edu/~c639772/](http://www.phlab.missouri.edu/~c639772/)

[women.html](http://women.html) ★★★★★

At press time, the **WARPED TOUR**—an annual punk, ska, and ska-punk show à la Lollapalooza—was looking for roadies. They offer room and board, plus \$500. The extravaganza is sponsored by Vans shoes; read up on it at the Vans site.

[www.vansshoes.com/Events/](http://www.vansshoes.com/Events/) ★★★★★

—D.A.B.

## DISKAGRAPHY

Some of the most popular ska, ska-punk, and ska-influenced bands have excellent Web sites themselves:

**Jurassic ska:** The Skatalites

[www.cybercom.net/~upsetter/skatalites/index.html](http://www.cybercom.net/~upsetter/skatalites/index.html)

**Second-Wave Ska:** Madness Online

[www.yi.com/home/LeighJordan/](http://www.yi.com/home/LeighJordan/)

**Ska-Influenced:** Fishbone

[gladstone.uoregon.edu/~cschatz/fishbone.html](http://gladstone.uoregon.edu/~cschatz/fishbone.html)

**Ska-Core:** Unofficial Home of The Mighty Mighty BossToneS

[www2.lycoming.edu/~braseth/bosstones.html](http://www2.lycoming.edu/~braseth/bosstones.html)

**Ska-Punk:** Goldfinger

[www.mojo-music.com/goldfinger/index.html](http://www.mojo-music.com/goldfinger/index.html)

**Ska to Watch:** Hepcat

[www.sure.net/~arkham/hepcat.html](http://www.sure.net/~arkham/hepcat.html)

## Usenet Newsgroups

alt.music.ska  
alt.music.ska-core  
alt.music.madness



# Horror Films

## THE BEST ★★★★★

Director David Lynch's controversial movie **THE LOST HIGHWAY** spooked those who saw it. The official site is as disturbing and surreal as the movie: technically elegant and sophisticated, yet purposefully obscure. You click randomly on faces, moving images,



R. ZUCKERMAN/PHOTO FANTASIES

Get pictures, sound files, and info galore about Pinhead, et al. at The Hellbound Web.

and bits of dialogue to go deeper into the site. Play around here long enough and pieces of the story unfold disjointedly. Atmospheric, moody, first class. Keep in mind: the links are not what they seem.

[www.lost-highway.com](http://www.lost-highway.com) ★★★★★

**ALIENS: THE WEB SITE**, an ode to the movie trilogy, is a fantastic site containing detailed information about all three *Alien* films. The eerie music and graphics re-create the atmosphere of the movies. The site has even been

endorsed by Sigourney Weaver. Read about the Alien's biology and behavior, and the bureaucracy that preserves the life form for its own ends. Jump into the requisite multimedia galleries, chat room, and FAQ. Fans will want to check out the plot summary, photos, and cast list of the latest sequel, due out this summer.

[www.vis-con.com/aliens/](http://www.vis-con.com/aliens/) ★★★★★

**THE HELLBOUND WEB** is the ultimate *Hellraiser* site, with loads of information about all the movies in the series. Best bits: a complete encyclopedia of all *Hellraiser*-related information and a good multimedia section with some truly stomach-turning images. There is also a chat room, a collection of fan fiction, and a link to a FAQ that features more than you really want to know about this cult series.

[www-personal.umich.edu/~rexerm/hell/](http://www-personal.umich.edu/~rexerm/hell/)

★★★★★

## THE REST ★★★★★

*Halloween* holds a place in the Hall of Horror as the granddaddy of the slasher flicks. Get the scoop on all six of these classics at **HALLOWEEN: THE HOMEPAGE OF MICHAEL MYERS**. The Behind the Scenes Information section includes interesting and little-known facts about how these films were created. Did you know Michael's face was based on a mask of William Shatner? There are also some interviews with cast members, plot summaries, fan forums and chat rooms, and clips of John Carpenter and many of the actors talking about the movies. Just don't answer the phone.

[www.ipass.net/~jrnyfan/index.htm](http://www.ipass.net/~jrnyfan/index.htm) ★★★★★



T. BURTON/PHOTO FANTASIES

**THE CABINET OF DR. CASEY** is a great tribute to the genre, with a complete reference section of horror literature and movies through the ages. There is a remarkably extensive section on horror posters, as well as a section for fan fiction.

[www.cat.pdx.edu/~caseyh/horror/index.html](http://www.cat.pdx.edu/~caseyh/horror/index.html) ★★★★★

**THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS** is very graphics-intensive (read: slow), but it is a delight for all you Jack Skellington fans. Listen to sound bites, e-mail the animators your feedback on the movie, and read scripts and rumors about a sequel.

[www.halloweentown.com](http://www.halloweentown.com) ★★★★★

Looking to scare yourself silly tonight? Print out a few pages of **LOSMAN'S LAIR OF HORROR**, then head to your video store. Losman has reviewed and rated dozens of classic horror films here, creating a series of top 10 lists: Really

## Usenet Newsgroups

alt.horror  
alt.cult-movies  
rec.arts.tv  
alt.cult-movies.alien  
alt.movies.monster  
rec.toys.action-figures  
alt.movies.tim-burton



Disturbing Movies, More Really Disturbing Movies, and an extra-large selection of Really Bad Horror Movies.



PHOTO FANTASIES

1935's *Bride of Frankenstein* is one of the films Touched by the Hand of Goth.

Highly opinionated, but informed. [www.express-news.net/losman/](http://www.express-news.net/losman/) ★★☆☆

Jason lives on at **FRIDAY THE 13TH**, thanks to plot summaries for all nine movies. (Yes, they really did make nine!) Got

an idea about how number 10 should begin? Write in, or just read what other fans think—and join the fan club. Also check out the ubiquitous picture galleries. Read up on news of sequels (Freddy vs. Jason!).

[www.geocities.com/Area51/9513/jason.html](http://www.geocities.com/Area51/9513/jason.html)

★★★☆☆

**TOUCHED BY THE HAND OF GOTH** is a literate look at the history of gothic horror films, from the classic *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* in 1919 to the scream queens of the 60s and 70s to the modern treatment of the gothic tales *The*

*Crow* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*.

[www.student oulu.fi/~sairwas/frameX/horror/](http://www.student oulu.fi/~sairwas/frameX/horror/)

★★★☆☆

**THE DARK SIDE OF THE WEB** has dozens of links to horror TV shows, movies, directors, writers, and actors.

[www.cascade.net/dmovies.html](http://www.cascade.net/dmovies.html) ★★☆☆☆

Ever wonder why the heroine opens the door to the basement when she hears that evil voice down there? She obviously has not read the **HORROR MOVIE SURVIVAL GUIDE**. It is full of important tips on how not to get eaten by zombies, captured by aliens, or bitten by vampires.

[www.parrett.net/~rralston/survive.html](http://www.parrett.net/~rralston/survive.html) ★★☆☆☆

Dedicated to a handful of films that seemed to produce more horror off-screen than on, **THE CURSE OF THE SILVER SCREEN** recounts, for example, the ways *Rosemary's Baby* wreaked havoc in the life of its producer.

[www.webville.com/oak/jwl/home1.html](http://www.webville.com/oak/jwl/home1.html)

★★★☆☆



*Demon Knight* and *Bordello of Blood*. Visit the Vault for sound clips, pictures, and scripts and the Cryptique for Tales-related merchandise.

[www.cryptnet.com](http://www.cryptnet.com) ★★☆☆☆

Fox's official page for **MILLENNIUM**, although highly commercial, is the best one out there to date. There is some good, basic information about this creepy series, such as character bios, an episode guide, an interview with show creator Chris Carter, and a few sneak previews of upcoming episodes. A cool simulated dial-up session lets you access the "secret files of the Millennium Group."

[www.foxworld.com/millnium/](http://www.foxworld.com/millnium/) ★★☆☆☆

Who doesn't realize that there are literally hundreds of "X-philes" out there making sites devoted to the mega-hit? **TERMINAL X** is one of the best and a great place to start exploring "The X-Files" presence on the Web.

[www.neosoft.com/sbanks/xfiles/xmap1.html](http://www.neosoft.com/sbanks/xfiles/xmap1.html) ★★☆☆☆

The official site for **THE OUTER LIMITS** has some really amazing graphics but is a bit thin in its content about the show, outside the usual episode guides and trivia questions.

[www.theouterlimits.com](http://www.theouterlimits.com) ★★☆☆☆

# Just Browsing?

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Ralph Grabowski  
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Every HTML and VRML command is given a description, syntax, and examples of use. Includes visual snapshots of each markup in use, and each HTML tag is marked with its version number to highlight new 3.2 features. 1996/258 pp./Softcover \$34.95/ISBN 0-387-94831-7



John Cowell

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HOW TO WRITE OBJECT ORIENTED SOFTWARE FOR THE INTERNET

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Yuval Fisher

**SPINNING THE WEB**

A GUIDE TO SERVING INFORMATION ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

This book shows you how to create user-friendly, compelling home pages. With this book, you'll learn how to: set up a Web site, ensure site security, create multimedia documents, process forms and other user data, and much more. 1996/536 pp./Softcover \$27.95/ISBN 0-387-94539-3



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# Investing News

## THE BEST ★★★★★

Ever notice how ads portraying successful people always show them studying *The Wall Street Journal*? Pretty soon they will be pictured clicking on **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL INTERACTIVE EDITION**, because Wall Street's paper of record is now the best source of market news online. For \$50/year (\$30 for subscribers to the \$175/year print edition), you can read the full text of the morning edition as well as breaking news, including some stories that appear in print as *Journal* exclusives the next day. You also can create a portfolio to track the stock price of up to 30 companies, examine their balance sheets, and search for news on those stocks over the past two weeks (or beyond, for a small additional fee).

[www.wsj.com](http://www.wsj.com) ★★★★★

Some of the savviest analyses we have seen of the day's big stories and current market trends are on **THE STREET**. The Street's small team of reporters produces an original report each evening that represents the best end-of-day analysis around. For \$13/month, you get the day's top stories, corporate earnings, and economic news. What keeps us coming back, however, is money manager James Cramer's "WRONG!" column, in which he pricks some conventional wisdom.

[www.thestreet.com](http://www.thestreet.com) ★★★★★

## THE REST ★★★★★

If what you really want most is investment ideas, your best source may be

**STANDARD & POOR's** Marketscope@Home service. For \$13/month (free samples available), it provides not only the requisite market commentary and headlines but also lists of likely takeover candidates, the latest "buy" or "sell" recommendations from Wall Street, plus a list of promising stocks. For another \$10/month, another S&P service will keep you posted of every company announcing a stock split, a move that



many pros believe presages a sharp run-up in their shares. (Ed. Note: *The reviewer is employed by McGraw-Hill, the parent of Standard & Poor's, so the rating is ours.*)

[www.stockinfo.standardpoor.com/mks.htm](http://www.stockinfo.standardpoor.com/mks.htm)

★★★★★

If you are a "big-picture" type who factors currency, interest rate, and other economic trends into your investment calculus, head to **BLOOMBERG's** free site. Bloomberg is the data junkie's dream: page after page of not only major stock indices but also U.S. and foreign interest rates, municipal bond yields, cross currency rates, and spot commodity prices that can't be found elsewhere in one site. You also can hear RealAudio clips from Bloomberg's global network

of correspondents, reporting live from the scene. Be forewarned: the data here is heavy-duty, and little interpretation is offered. Not for neophytes.

[www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com) ★★★★★

**MERCURY MAIL** delivers free news and market updates four times a day, plus Internet, currency, and commodity reports once a day via the best e-mail service we have seen. It even offers e-mail in HTML format (so you can read it in your browser and visit the sites it mentions instantly), including stock charts.

[www.merc.com](http://www.merc.com) ★★★★★

For those interested in more than stocks and mutual funds, **BRIEFING.COM** Professional is one of the few sites offering professional-caliber same-day analysis of the foreign exchange and fixed-income markets.

For \$25/month, you get sophisticated stock coverage, with technical trading points, assessments of more than a dozen industry sectors, and a "Story Stocks" feature that analyzes more than 50 big movers each day—more than anyone else.

[www.briefing.com](http://www.briefing.com) ★★★★★

**MICROSOFT INVESTOR** features insightful guest columns by

big-time Wall Street gurus such as James Grant and Michael Murphy. You can even leave Bill Gates a stock tip of your own (as if he needs one) in one of the many discussion groups.

[www.investor.msn.com](http://www.investor.msn.com) ★★★★★

—D.F.

## ALL NEWS, ALL DAY

You won't find much breaking news at *Money* magazine's **MONEY ONLINE** site. But it does offer a nifty Java applet that charts in graph form the ups and downs of the Dow Jones Industrial Average, S&P 500, and other major indices each day. Click on "Market Minder," and the applet will run in a corner of your PC desktop.

[pathfinder.com/money/](http://pathfinder.com/money/)



# Celebrity Gossip

## THE BEST ★★★★★

An old-timer by Web standards, **MR. SHOWBIZ** still holds the prize for the most extensive online coverage of Hollywood. Backed by archived stories and a database of film star bios, Mr. Showbiz's news reports and interviews tread that fine line between entertainment news and gossip, with news predominating. They tend to balance the rumors with some cold-water facts and then let you be the judge.

[www.mrshowbiz.com](http://www.mrshowbiz.com) ★★★★★

When **E! ONLINE** talks trash, it ain't shy. For example: recent reports on Dick Cavett's house burning down also repeated the news of his manic depression; news of Ken Wahl's engagement to *Playboy* model Shane Barbi mentioned his alcoholism; and a roundup of Martin Lawrence's recent problems ended with the opinion that he is suffering a nervous breakdown. Lots of pictures and links to the filmographies of every referenced star. Anything and anyone is fair game for E Online's surgical strikes.

[www.eonline.com](http://www.eonline.com) ★★★★★

Never one to take the high road, Adam Curry's **CYBER-SLEAZE** delivers huge dollops of dirt every day for anyone interested in the less-admirable aspects of Hollywood. Ranging wide across the worlds of television, movies, and music, Curry allows no fight, sexual liaison, or pharmaceutical peccadillo to go unnoticed. In the fine

tradition of Net opining, however, Curry also will stand on a virtual soapbox every now and then to make gratuitous comments about censors, right-wing politicians, and anyone else who might be offended by the excesses of the glitterati.

[metaverse.com/vibe/sleaze/index.html](http://metaverse.com/vibe/sleaze/index.html)

★★★★★

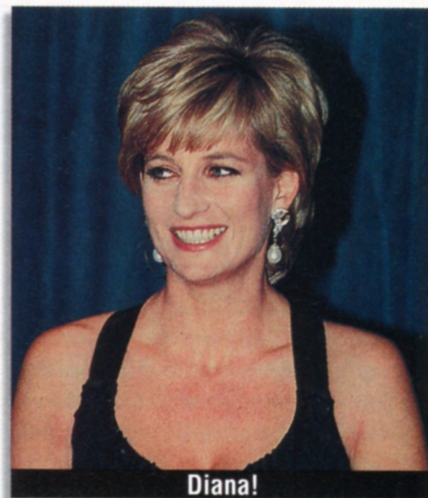
## THE REST ★★★★★

**BITESITE**, sponsored by Hollywood Online, has a big catalog of sound-bite-sized interviews with various actors and directors, all in RealAudio format (a few have written transcripts as well). Don't expect to learn anything too shocking or titillating, but if you just *have* to hear the sound of Nicole Kidman's voice before you go to bed—and your name isn't Tom Cruise—you'll enjoy the tasty bites.

[www.bitesite.com](http://www.bitesite.com)

★★★★☆

**BUZZ ONLINE** is the cyber version of the L.A. print magazine that explores everything about the city, including its biggest export: entertainment. While each issue can be sure to have a telling interview with an up-and-comer and other stories about the hip-wah-zee, it is the Buzzsaw section that cuts to the quick with its insider film industry reports. Given that the City



Diana!

of Angels' chief obsession is itself, *Buzz* Online is a nice mirror for L.A. to see its beauty marks and blemishes.

[www.buzzmag.com](http://www.buzzmag.com) ★★★★★

**CH@TSOUP** is the Prodigy-sponsored online gossip site. Columnist Michael Lewittes—who claims to be the one who broke the Michael Jackson molestation allegations a few years ago—checks in with dirt that's actually worth the dig, and the rest is basically reshapes of second- and third-tier stars' appearances in Prodigy chat forums.

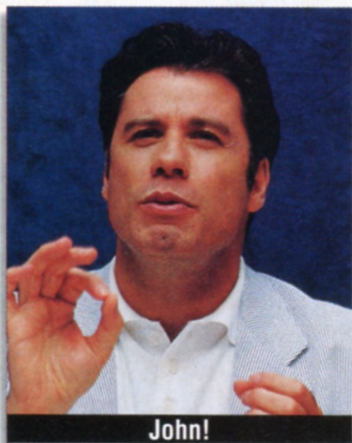
[www.chatsoup.com](http://www.chatsoup.com) ★★★★★

A certain Texas-bred gossip columnist, whose name is pretty much synonymous with gossip, has made the leap to cyberspace. Catch **LIZ SMITH**'s disses and fawning kisses here.

[www.newsday.com/mainnews/lizsmith.htm](http://www.newsday.com/mainnews/lizsmith.htm)

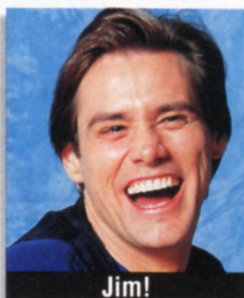
★★★★☆

John Austin's **HOLLYWOOD INSIDE** provides a nice balance between longer, full-detail kinds of stories—such as the O'Neal-Fawcett split—and one-shot blind items that provide fodder for delicious speculation. (Example: "What's this we hear about a great deal of 'bitchiness' on the set of a new film between Hollywood's 'glamour girl' and one of its oldest and most respected



John!

YORAMI KAHANA/SHOOTING STAR INTL



Jim!

YORAMI KAHANA/SHOOTING STAR INTL



Oscar-winning stars?") The site is not pretty, and the too-large pictures (mostly promotional stills for new movies) that accompany the gossip are rather pointless, but the inside scoops are definitely worth a read.

[www.ez2.net/hollywood/index.html](http://www.ez2.net/hollywood/index.html)

★★★☆☆

Doris T.—film reporter and (now) gossip columnist—takes an interesting view of show biz: she thinks the Net is worth gossip, too. That's why, in addition to the usual Hollywood tantrums and publicity notices, you also will hear about Microsoft's involvement in the burgeoning world of Web entertainment, America



Cyndi!

Online's Greenhouse "shows," and whatever else Doris finds fascinating. Compared to other gossip columns, **DAILY DIGEST** by Doris T. is rather tame, but should be included if you are making the online talk-tale circuit.



Ewan!

[www.pkbaseline.com/screen/digest/](http://www.pkbaseline.com/screen/digest/) ★★★☆☆

For a lighter dose of celeb rubbernecking, be sure to check out **SOMETHIN' JUICY**. There are daily bite-sized bits of wholesome gossip offered on the Web that also can be delivered directly to your e-mail box if you sign up for the mailing list.

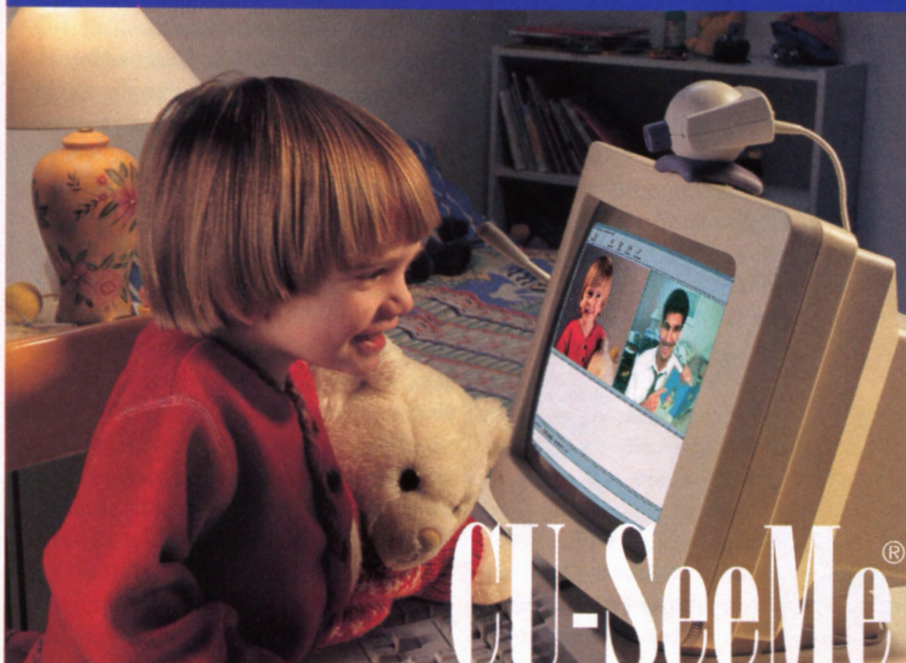
[www.dnx.com/gossip/](http://www.dnx.com/gossip/) ★★★☆☆

—D.A.B.

## OOOH, THEY ARE SO NASTY!

The most unsubstantiated, ruthless, and outrageous celebrity gossip on the Internet is found, not surprisingly, in the Usenet newsgroups, especially **alt.showbiz.gossip**. ASG, as it is known by regulars, is all about gossip—so much so that if some unwitting soul whines that Matt LeBlanc's sex life is his own business, honors go to the first poster who flames with, "Yet another Bozo who forgot the name of the newsgroup!" In fact, there are more traditions that must be honored in ASG than in, say, Westminster Abbey. Reading the anti-FAQ ([www.rt66.com/~nlopez/afaq.htm](http://www.rt66.com/~nlopez/afaq.htm)) is probably a good idea before you go and spell out the word "lesbian" in your posting—no, homophobia isn't the reason—or dredge up that old story about Jamie Lee Curtis's genetic background in your debut post. In ASG, if a rumor is more than a week old, it has probably been married to Anna Nicole Smith.

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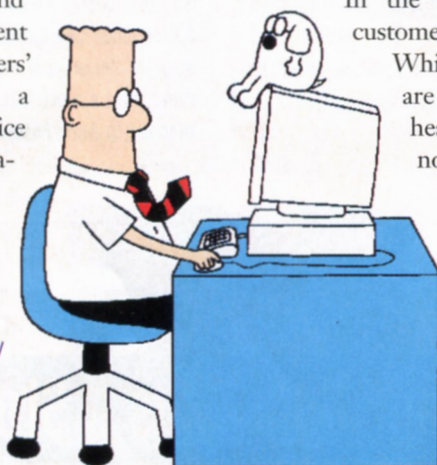
# Relieving Misery on the Job

## THE BEST ★★★★★

Ever met a person who has never spent a single working day feeling disgruntled? Neither have we. So we set out to find places to hang out and breathe in some comic relief when you are in dire need of a vacation. **DISGRUNTLED** features much more than just the funny side of being in a dead-end job. The employee handbook clarifies privacy and other employment laws, and the Readers' Section contains a guide to pulling office pranks. The magazine also has job-hunting tips you might want to use before misery takes its toll.

[www.disgruntled.com/dishome.html](http://www.disgruntled.com/dishome.html)

★★★★★



Amid the daily comics and word puzzles in **THE DILBERT ZONE**, Dilbert's smarter sidekick teaches all you managers-to-be clever buzzwords such as "paradigm" and "revenue" that will make you look intelligent amongst your minions. Best bit: a game in which you win by shooting clueless consultants, dead-weight VPs, and bewildered managers.

[www.dilbert.com](http://www.dilbert.com) ★★★★★

## THE REST ★★★★★

Be nice to **THE DISGRUNTLED DELIVERY BOY** or he'll run over your pizza with his delivery car. The site, from an engineer who moonlights as a pizza deliverer, is full of his amusing

employment-related horror stories: getting lost, getting a bad check for 50 pizzas, and a slight mishap with a security gate that left him with cold pizza and no money. Help the guy out: read the tips on what not to bother asking when ordering a pizza ("I have a coupon [for] your carry-out special, can I get that delivered?").

[www.netzone.com/~bukwheat/](http://www.netzone.com/~bukwheat/) ★★★★★

In the service business, the customers are always right. Which doesn't mean they are always right in the head. Even though Dan no longer works as a manager at McDonalds, he still has plenty of stories about customers who try to buy food with casino tokens and who return half-eaten burgers because they are square. At

**DAN'S FRONT COUNTER**, read stupid customer comments, including: "What's the difference between the orange 'juice' and the orange 'drink'?" More bitter than most, but it may just make your job look great by comparison.

[members.aol.com/dmcgripes/home.htm](http://members.aol.com/dmcgripes/home.htm) ★★★★★

Forget the dog, beware of the postman! **THE DISGRUNTLED POSTAL WORKER ZONE** focuses on perhaps the most notorious and



Be kind to The Disgruntled Delivery Boy—or else!



The Disgruntled Postal Worker Zone's version of "The Homecoming Queen's Got a Gun!"

maligned breed of disgruntled worker: the postal employee. Read real news reports about postal workers who snap at their bosses, steal mail, and wear gorilla masks. You can even buy a disgruntled postal pin to wear on your work uniform.

[www.well.com/user/ecp/](http://www.well.com/user/ecp/) ★★★★★

Vote for your favorite boss jokes and one-liners (such as, "I'm not a CPA, but working for my boss is taxing") at **MY BOSS**.

[www.myboss.com](http://www.myboss.com) ★★★★★

One working girl has some useful tips on how to look busy at a boring job when you are **WORKING FOR THE MAN**. She spells out ways to have fun annoying coworkers and management. Sporting a fake cast, for example, might convince superiors to let you leave work early. Great, silly comic relief.

[www.urbekah.com/housewife/workingforthem.html](http://www.urbekah.com/housewife/workingforthem.html) ★★★★★

Calling in sick with a good excuse isn't easy. **LAUGHNET—JOB RELATED HUMOR** lists plenty of "believable" excuses: try saying your stigmata is acting up, or that your dog ate the car keys and so you have to hitchhike to the vet. The site also points out phrases not to put on a resumé, such as "I was recently acquitted" and "I know where you live."

[top.monad.net/~stephen-henry/career.htm](http://top.monad.net/~stephen-henry/career.htm) ★★★★★

—B.J.B.



# Sports for Kids

## THE BEST ★★★★★

Whether looking for the latest news on a favorite baseball player or trying to learn to be a better goalkeeper, Little Leaguers and junior high students alike will find plenty of action online. No site has a better combination of news, features, games, and multimedia than **SPORTS ILLUSTRATED FOR KIDS**, a wonderful place that treats kids like the mature consumers they often are. The Shorter Reporter takes kids' suggested questions and puts them to superstars such as hoops idol Reggie Miller, who admits he was afraid of clowns when he was a kid. There are some cool sports games, too. We loved the special section for girls, featuring athletes such as gymnast Dominique Dawes. The special report on Jackie Robinson (who broke baseball's color barrier 50 years ago this season) is worthy of an award with its rich multimedia features, including a RealAudio broadcast of his Hall of Fame speech and testimonials from current sports stars such as Ken Griffey, Jr. and Grant Hill.

[www.sikids.com](http://www.sikids.com) ★★★★★

## THE REST ★★★★★

**BONUS.COM**, the self-described "Super-Site for Kids," has a terrific section on sports, from skateboarding and baseball to a gymnastics area featuring Olympic star Kerri Strug. And the range of sports is impressive, from the major sports to surfing, in-line skating, mountain biking, unicycles, snowboarding, and even juggling. We loved both the kids' Q&A with football star Jerry Rice and the

skateboarding section: "Skateboarding's not a hobby, it's a way of life."

[www.bonus.com](http://www.bonus.com) ★★★★★

The bulletin boards on the **YOUTH HOCKEY NETWORK** hold messages from players and parents all across North America and Europe. It is a true headquarters for young hockey enthusiasts. You also will find tips on coaching;



*Sports Illustrated for Kids* has fun games—try your luck assembling the Ken Griffey, Jr. puzzle.

buying equipment; the rules of the game; and information on schools, leagues, and associations from Miami to Calgary.

[www.youthhockeynetwork.com](http://www.youthhockeynetwork.com) ★★★★★

Not very pretty, but chock-full of good advice is **THE LOCKER ROOM**, which features 12 different sports instruction sections (some are under construction), including volleyball, field hockey, gymnastics, and bowling. There are lots of tips here on conditioning, techniques, warming up, and competition.

[members.aol.com/msdaizy/sports/locker.html](http://members.aol.com/msdaizy/sports/locker.html)

★★★★★



Rodeo for youngsters is the focus of **ARENA WEST**, the site of a female rodeo riders' organization that features results of barrel-roping and bareback riding events, an online store, and a monthly newsletter. The best section is Go! Show! Rodeo!, a potpourri of correspondence from young fans, including Q&As with the experts and a letter from an 11-year-old rodeo participant.

[www.arenawest.com](http://www.arenawest.com) ★★★★★

Are you a good high school baseball player? You may want to register your vital stats in the online database on **BATTERUP**, a serious youth baseball site aimed at developing top amateur players for college. There is info on tournaments and camps, trivia contests, and a bulletin board for coaches, players, and parents.

[www.batterup.com](http://www.batterup.com) ★★★★★

At **SOCCER LYNX**, there is a nifty online game you can play: describe your soccer skills, and the site will match you with a pro player with the same style, your "spiritual other in the world game."

It is a great come-on for ambitious young soccer players. And if you are serious, there is an in-depth section on the Olympic Development Program. Who knows? The Net just might help you make Team USA.

[www.soccerlynx.com](http://www.soccerlynx.com)

★★★★★

—T.W.





# Cycling

## THE BEST ★★★★★

No matter what type of cycling you prefer, you'll need to sit roadside with an Allen wrench at some point—so be ready for it. The **WWW BIKE REPAIR SHOP** is a thorough, well-crafted site with a large selection of clearly illustrated bike repair instructions, including a fix for a problem that has puzzled us for the past year. The site also describes the tools you will need and reviews products that true gearheads will love, such as brakes.

[www.uidaho.edu/~baile934/](http://www.uidaho.edu/~baile934/) ★★★★★

## THE REST ★★★★★

Like a well-ordered pace line of riders drafting each other, **CYCLING.ORG** does an excellent job of organizing bicyclists. The Directories section has information about more than 400 bicycle organizations around the world. This is useful if you are traveling and want to ride with a local bike club.

[cycling.org](http://cycling.org) ★★★★★

If you have ever been tempted to hit the road and just keep on going, read the **TAILWINDS** home page first, which contains the 600-page play-by-play (literally) of Ed Noonan's odyssey. He packed a laptop and digital camera and chronicled his 1996 ride from Alaska to Florida. By the way, he is planning a trip from

California to Nova Scotia via Michigan and Boston in the summer of 1997, so stay tuned.

[www.voyager.net/tailwinds/general/index.html](http://www.voyager.net/tailwinds/general/index.html)

★★★★★

Stop the presses—the **BICYCLE NEWS AGENCY** carries bicycle-related news articles that the traditional bike magazines are unlikely to carry. An effort of love by Danish journalism student Ernst Poulsen, stories are culled from a variety of bicycle newsletters and Usenet groups. Typical of the stories are those about bicycle-friendly companies and touring in faraway places. There are stories from around the world, with an emphasis on Europe.

[webhotel.uni-c.dk/dcf/agency.htm](http://webhotel.uni-c.dk/dcf/agency.htm) ★★★★★

If bicycle racing quickens your pulse, the best site for you is **VELONEWS INTERACTIVE**. Catering to the road- and mountain-bike racing scenes, VeloNews provides race results and other news updated throughout the week, along with articles about the latest gadgetry and training tips for Miguel Indurain wanna-bes.

[www.velonews.com/VeloNews/](http://www.velonews.com/VeloNews/) ★★★★★

Our favorite site for Tour de France coverage is **VELOCITY**. This bilingual

French/English site had minute-by-minute tour coverage during last year's race. If you keep hitting the Refresh button it is almost like listening to it on the radio. Tune in.

[www.worldmedia.fr/velo/index.html](http://www.worldmedia.fr/velo/index.html) ★★★★★



PATRICK O'GRADY/VELONEWS

No one in the cycling world is safe from Patrick O'Grady's lampooning at VeloNews.

**WOMBATS** is an organization dedicated to some truly cool propositions. First, it believes that women have a place in the often-macho bicycling community. Second, it is dedicated to fun. And finally, it is dedicated to mountain biking. Started by mountain-bike racing pioneer Jacquie Phelan (aka Alice B. Toeclips), this flourishing organization is about empowering women riders.

[www.wombats.org](http://www.wombats.org) ★★★★★



KOWALSKI

A useful feature at Tailwinds is Ed Noonan's list of packing suggestions for longer trips.

**BIKEMAP.COM** provides details about regional and national transit companies, such as bus, train, and ferry companies, that encourage you to bring your bike on board. This is important information for bicycle tourists. So far, this site has details about almost 120 transit companies, none of which are airlines.

[www.bikemap.com](http://www.bikemap.com) ★★★★★

It's all in your head. Make sure it stays that way by visiting the **BICYCLE HELMET SAFETY INSTITUTE** and learning all the latest information about helmets and bicycle safety.

[www.bhsi.org](http://www.bhsi.org) ★★★★★

—D.H.



RONDEAU/SPORT



## KUDROW

continued from page 53

**YIL:** A folk singer?

**KUDROW:** No. That to me is just a hilarious joke. I love people who take themselves too seriously with their art.

**YIL:** So you don't aspire to do songs like "Smelly Cat."

**KUDROW:** No, though I am interested in music. I haven't done anything with it because I'm really too conscious of those actors who write and record their music and paint and fancy themselves as Renaissance artists.

**YIL:** A lot has been made about how intelligent you are. Was your nickname really Einstein in school?

**KUDROW:** In college, one guy called me that. He just used to say, "You're Einstein. You're a f\_\_\_ing Einstein."


**YIL:** Since you grew up with—and worked with—a father who was a renowned headache specialist, have you surfed the Net to check out medical sites? Looked up headaches?

**KUDROW:** I haven't, though I would be interested in looking. Now *that's* what's good about the Net—as a place to search for information. When I worked with my father, I saw how much misinformation is out there.

**YIL:** Is the story true that Jon Lovitz, a friend of your father, encouraged you in your acting ambitions?

**KUDROW:** Yes. He really inspired me. It's why I went to try out for the Groundlings, an improv group.

**YIL:** And you used your humor to get the rest of the way.

**KUDROW:** Yeah, though it began early, with my family. I kept feeling like I was getting encouragement. Like, "Oh, you're good at this." And it had a profound impact on me. When I began doing improvisation, it turned me from a kind of judgmental, fearful person into a very open and trusting person. That type of person may be less funny than a judgmental, fearful, angry person—but it's an easier person to be. 

## SITES IN THIS STORY

PULP FRIENDS?

[www.students.uiuc.edu/~jrbenst/TOWTGM.html](http://www.students.uiuc.edu/~jrbenst/TOWTGM.html)

PHOEBE'S GREATEST HITS


[www3.synet.net/~germ/phbesong.html](http://www3.synet.net/~germ/phbesong.html)

## THE GAY CONNECTION

continued from page 83

"Webmaster" a whole new meaning. When you inevitably start feeling overwhelmed, gateway services such as OutBox or PlanetOut ("your queer global village") thoughtfully tame the lavender chaos into tidy, accessible categories. You can even volunteer online, working from the privacy of your own bathrobe. There are documented cases where volunteer gay chat-room counselors have talked despondent gay teens out of suicide online, letting them know they are not alone and connecting them to support services. The L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center now has plans for a professionally staffed chat room dedicated to supporting isolated gay and lesbian youth, where saving lives at 9600 baud is all in a virtual day's work.

When it comes to saving lives, the Web literally can mean life and death for people with HIV and AIDS. Today, thousands of HIV-related Web sites provide the latest data from HIV treatment options (**Project Inform**) to safer sex. **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, the **National Library of Medicine**, and scores of universities have archives of professional information, articles, and journals online. You can locate care-partner and grief support groups, learn how to make a memorial **AIDS quilt** panel, and even order HIV-related medications directly, without the local pharmacist having to know your business.

Despite such lifesaving promise, gay and AIDS sites such as QRD are increasingly showing up on the censorship lists created by those-who-know-better-for-you-than-you-do. Although QRD, for example, contains neither graphic materials nor erotica, it has been banned in Boston, as the city's public library system uses censoring software that seemingly screens out anything with a pink tinge (the Thought Police also have blocked subversive groups such as the National Organization for Women). In this freest of all media, the cybercensors would like to make sure our love remains the URL that dares not speak its name. But they forgot one thing: once you put a modem line in a closet, it isn't a closet anymore. You could go ask Becky, but she's...out. 

## SITES IN THIS STORY

DIGITAL QUEERS

[www.dq.org](http://www.dq.org)

QUEER RESOURCES DIRECTORY

[www.qrd.org](http://www.qrd.org)

L/G/B/T/INDEX

[www.yahoo.com/Society\\_and\\_Culture/Lesbians\\_Gays\\_and\\_Bisexuals](http://www.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Lesbians_Gays_and_Bisexuals)

PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS

[www.critpath.org/pflag-talk/](http://www.critpath.org/pflag-talk/)

NATIONAL LESBIAN AND GAY TASK FORCE

[www.nglftf.org](http://www.nglftf.org)

NATIONAL DIRECTORY OF LESBIAN AND GAY

COMMUNITY CENTERS

[www.gaycenter.org:80/natctr/index.html](http://www.gaycenter.org:80/natctr/index.html)

GAY.NET

[www.gaynet.com](http://www.gaynet.com)

PERSIMMON'S RADICAL FAERIES HOME PAGE

[www.eskimo.com/~davidk/faeries/faeries.html](http://www.eskimo.com/~davidk/faeries/faeries.html)

OUTBOX

[www.outbox.com](http://www.outbox.com)

THE LESBIGAY PARENTING HOMEPAGE

[www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/3378/](http://www.geocities.com/WestHollywood/3378/)

GAY MEN'S SPIRITUALITY HOME PAGE

[www.thepark.com/barzan/main.htm](http://www.thepark.com/barzan/main.htm)

GAY MALE S/M ACTIVISTS

[www.ability.net/gmsma/](http://www.ability.net/gmsma/)

PLANETOUT

[www.planetout.com](http://www.planetout.com)

THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL

AND PREVENTION

[www.cdcnac.org](http://www.cdcnac.org)

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE

[gopher://gopher.nlm.nih.gov/11/aids](http://gopher://gopher.nlm.nih.gov/11/aids)

AIDS QUILT

[www.aidsquilt.org](http://www.aidsquilt.org)

PROJECT INFORM

[www.projinf.org](http://www.projinf.org)

ONLINE SERVICE AREAS

AOL Keyword: *onQ*



# AS (Pretty Strange)

## Here, Kitty Kitty

Ever wonder why so many squirrels feel compelled to risk death by running in front of speeding cars, stuffing their cheeks to the near-popping point, and taunting dogs and cats? Well, someone wondered enough to examine their bizarre risk-taking behavior in an anthropological study entitled "Squirrel Hazing: The Untold Story." [web.wt.net/~psherr/squirrel\\_hazing.htm](http://web.wt.net/~psherr/squirrel_hazing.htm)



## A Little Piece of Home



You can't sniff it, you can't trample on it, and you can't rub it between your fingers. Frankly, most of it doesn't even look interesting. But you should click over to the exhibits in The Dirt Museum anyway. The site's mission is to gather dirt samples from significant locations across the planet. Online so far, among dozens of others, is dirt from the grassy knoll in Dallas, the bridge at Chappaquiddick, the Acropolis, Pompeii, and a mass grave in London for victims of the Black Plague. [www.planet.com/dirtweb/dirt.html](http://www.planet.com/dirtweb/dirt.html)

## Better Than Mail Order

The site proclaims that it's "Not a chain letter! Not a scam! Not a federal crime illegal in 50 states!" The Amazing 8,000 Wives Program! guarantees you will receive 8,000 wives within three weeks. Just send your wife to the first name on the list, then...oh, you know the rest, right? [www.ugcs.caltech.edu/~jonathan/8000wives.html](http://www.ugcs.caltech.edu/~jonathan/8000wives.html)

## How Do You Drive a Dummy Crazy?

Put him in a round room and tell him there's a penny in the corner. In a stunningly stupid twist on this old joke, Ila Press has created an unwinnable game of "Simon Says" in which Simon never gives you the nod. [free.like.it/~maydelah/simon.htm](http://free.like.it/~maydelah/simon.htm)



## How to Liven Up a Long Drive

No need to scour the maps looking for diverting detours. Roadside America excels in finding wacky attractions: glamorous gas chambers, grave sites of famous animals, a funeral home that offers indoor miniature golf, and no less than six alligator farms. [www.roadsideamerica.com/vortex.html](http://www.roadsideamerica.com/vortex.html)

## Next Time You Think, Think Fernet

Fernet takes instant food to a new high with products such as Peel-A-Meal ("the convenience of a banana with the cheezy [sic] and meaty flavors you want!"), Dinner Sprinkles (now in new Delicious-Style!), Liquid Meat, and Spray Cheeze [sic]. All are delightfully and lovingly illustrated and explained here. [www.fernetel.com/index.html](http://www.fernetel.com/index.html)



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